



28
THEOLOGICAL UNION
OF
MOUNT ALLISON WESLEYAN COLLEGE.

FOURTH
ANNUAL LECTURE
AND
SERMON.

DELIVERED JUNE, 1882.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.
J. & A. McMILLAN, 98 PRINCE WILLIAM STREET.
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SAINT PAUL'S DOCTRINE
OF
THE ATONEMENT:

BEING THE

FOURTH ANNUAL LECTURE BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL UNION OF
MOUNT ALLISON WESLEYAN COLLEGE.

DELIVERED JUNE, 1882,

BY

REV. HOWARD SPRAGUE, D.D.

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LECTURE.

SAINT PAUL'S DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

WHETHER it be wise or not to speculate upon a theme so mysterious as the *rationale* of Redemption, the human mind, obeying a native impulse, has speculated, with abundant and varied, if not with satisfactory results. Numerous theories of Atonement, sanctioned by illustrious names and supported by ingenious reasoning, are offered to inquiring Christians. It is impossible to be indifferent spectators of the many-sided controversy, in which the disputants deal with the fundamental facts of the Christian religion, and in which they freely charge each other with mistaking the central truths of Revelation, and even with misrepresenting and traducing the character of God. But what hope is there that we shall be able to decide which of these theories is true, or whether any is? Is it worth the effort to do so? Or may we more wisely decline the tedious task, and repose upon the simple facts which they profess to explain?

There is a disposition to put the facts and the doctrines of Christianity in contrast, the one as the objects of faith and the basis of hope, the other as a field of curious and useless speculation, and to arrange the Gospels and Epistles in this order of relative importance. But the facts of Redemption can be nothing to us until we have some view of their nature and relations; and our view of their nature and relations is our doctrine of the Atonement. It may be meagre, and it may be false; but if Christ is our Saviour, and we are Christians, we hold some view of what He has done for us.

DeQuincey, in old age, reports himself as having been always unable to resolve this theme, and as having obtained no assistance either from the philosophizings of Coleridge or the simpler

explanations of his clear-headed and thoughtful mother. "There are," he says, "countless different schemes to expound this doctrine of trust and appropriation; but they remind me of the *ancilia* at Rome, the eleven copies of the sacred shield, or Palladium: to prevent the true one being stolen, the eleven were made exactly like it. So with the *true doctrine* of the Atonement: it is lurking among the others that look like it; but who is to say *which* of them all it is?"*

So long as speculation busies itself with the construction of theories, for which it afterwards seeks support in the Scriptures, there will be the variety and confusion of opinion which perplexed even the acute and brilliant essayist. The Atonement is a matter of revelation: the Scriptures alone can tell us what it is. After we have found it there, we may seek confirmatory evidence in the speculations of the philosopher, and illustrations in history and the relations of social life. But what we find, or fail to find, in these fields of inquiry, can neither affect its character as the Bible reveals it, nor disturb the foundations of its truth.

To this inquiry into the testimony of Revelation, I propose to direct your attention; and, as it would be impossible to survey the whole field of the teaching even of the New Testament, I select that of a single writer, and ask: "What was St. Paul's doctrine of the Atonement?"

The question is not intended to suggest that Paul may have had a peculiar view, differing in important, or even in subordinate details, from that of other Apostles; but simply that we may hope to find in his writings a view definite and complete. There are, however, in his case, some special reasons for separating his doctrine from that of the others, for the purpose of distinct consideration. One reason is the fact that he reached it independently of them. He tells us that for three years after his conversion he did not visit Jerusalem, and did not see an Apostle; that for fourteen years longer he pursued an independent course; that then he visited the Capital to declare and defend the Gospel he preached among the Gentiles, and to assert the

* Page's "Life of DeQuincey," Am. ed., Vol. I., p. 393.

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rights of the Gentile churches ; and that the pillars of the mother church—Peter, James, and John—could add nothing to his knowledge of the truth, but, giving to him the right hand of fellowship, recognized at once the fulness of his Gospel and the fruitfulness of his work.* By his own knowledge of the ancient Scriptures ; by his reading, in the light of them, the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord ;† above all, by “ the revelation of the Son of God in him,”‡ he had gained his doctrine independently of human aid. It was emphatically his. His own thought, his own spiritual experience, his own communings with the divine Saviour, had led him into the atoning mystery of Messiah's death. The doctrine of others may confirm his : he did not need the confirmation. He stood on independent and solid ground.

Another reason for the separate consideration of St. Paul's doctrine is the transcendent influence it has had on the religious thinkings of the world. A few great minds, appearing, for the most part, singly and in widely separate epochs, have determined the course and the character of theologic thought ; and, among the few, the chief is Paul. He was ignorant of the Christian faith until near the middle of his life. After he embraced it, he had no leisure for study and system-building, except the three years in Arabia and the time he spent in Tarsus and its neighborhood before coming to Antioch. From Antioch onward he was on long journeys and in busy evangelism ; passed through repeated and severe suffering ; through much of the time earned his daily bread by manual toil, and through most of it carried the burden of broken health. Yet his occasional letters to the churches reveal an intense activity of thought, contain the substance of Christian doctrine, and have controlled the thinkings of the great Christians of ancient and modern times. No influence is so plainly impressed on the great theologians and systems of the church,—Augustine, Anselm, Luther, Calvin, Arminius, Edwards,—so that it has become the fashion with rationalistic students of the beginnings of Christianity to speak of St. Paul as the founder of the Christian church and faith.

* Gal. i. 17—ii. 9.

† Acts xiii. 27–37.

Gal. i. 12.

To avoid any appearance of begging the question in the very title of this discourse, it may be well to explain the sense in which I use the word "Atonement." It occurs but once in the authorized version of the New Testament,* and disappears from the revised, the substituted word being "reconciliation." This is the etymological meaning of the term,—the at-one-ment,—and was a common use of it when the authorized version was made. Frequent use of it, in this sense, is found in Shakespeare :

"He desires to make atonement
Betwixt the Duke of Gloucester and your brothers."†

"I would do much
To atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio;"‡

and so in many other places.

This word, like many others, has now transferred its meaning backward from the effect to the cause; and in the language of theology designates, not the result of the work of Christ, but that work itself, or rather, so much of it as produced this particular result. It is perfectly fair to question the wisdom and convenience of this change; but it is useless to insist upon the ancient meaning in the theological discussions of the present day; and it is frivolous to produce that meaning as an argument against the reality of the thing which the word now denotes. Christ reconciled God and man: the harmony thus secured could formerly be called Atonement. How did He do so? The answer to this question gives what is meant by Atonement now. The word belongs to no particular theory, but to any theory which professes to answer the question. Did St. Paul give an answer? When we have found it, we have found his doctrine of the Atonement.

There are two accounts of his teaching,—the fragmentary reports of his preaching in the Acts of the Apostles, and the record of his doctrine in his own Epistles. It is not now possible to discuss the authenticity of the reports and the genuineness of the letters. And it is not necessary. A successful defence has been made by competent scholars against the assaults of Baur and

* Rom. v. 11. † Richard the Third, I. iii. 36. ‡ Othello IV. i. 244.

Zeller upon the credibility of the Acts. The Pauline Epistles are the part of Scripture which has given the greatest trouble to the destructive critics. Those of them which are the most important for the present purpose are, on all hands, confessed to be genuine, and have never been the subjects of serious doubt. Even so free a critic as Renan, dividing them into five classes,—the unquestioned, the certain, the probable, the doubtful, and the false,—puts but three Epistles in the fifth class, and one in the fourth, viz., those to Timothy, to Titus, and to the Ephesians.* So far as I am capable of judging, the arguments against the genuineness of these letters are more than answered by the internal evidence and the belief of the ancient church. St. Paul's doctrine of the Atonement would, however, be complete without them; and almost every passage of them to which I shall have occasion to refer, has its meaning expressed in parallel passages of the other letters.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is held by some critics of all schools to be the work of another writer; but some of those who hold this view maintain that it furnishes abundant evidence that its author was familiar with St. Paul's teaching, and probably wrote it under his inspiration or supervision. It is sublime in its Christology, and rich in its treatment of the doctrines of the Cross; and these doctrines are the doctrines of St. Paul. But we are not at liberty to use it in the present inquiry. With this exception, however, all the letters which bear the Apostle's name may be appealed to in illustration of his doctrine.

It would not be necessary to say that our investigation is purely inductive, and aims at discovering the truth by finding and comparing the facts, were it not that convenience and brevity of discussion compel a classification of texts from the beginning, and that it may be supposed the texts have been selected and arranged to meet the demands of a foregone conclusion. On the contrary, everything that has come down to us from the lips and pen of the Apostle has been carefully examined; every passage bearing upon the subject, unless the bearing is very

* Renan: Saint Paul, Am. Trans. p. 10.

indirect, has been noted ; and the classification to be given is the result. The necessity for some classification arises out of the character of the Epistles, of which nearly all are not formally doctrinal. They were written, save in two instances, to churches or persons whom Paul had directly instructed, and who must have been familiar with his doctrine in a matter so fundamental as the redeeming work of the Lord. His references to this subject are therefore incidental in the majority of his letters, and, on this very account, have an importance which does not belong to formal reasoning ; for they imply a general acceptance of the doctrine by the churches and persons addressed, that it was of the very substance of the Christian faith as universally held in the churches planted by St. Paul.

I. One characteristic of St. Paul's treatment of the work of Redemption is conspicuous and constant throughout the letters : it is that his notice of the earthly life of the Redeemer, as related to it, begins at the end. He does not detail the facts of the Saviour's history,—only two or three times does he refer to any,—until he comes to the close ; and then he fixes upon the Cross a fascinated eye. The death and the resurrection of Jesus, these are for Paul the two momentous facts : and his whole treatment of them implies that in these, but especially in the former, the Cross, the Blood, the Death of Christ, he regards the Lord as sustaining a unique relation to the world.

This is characteristic both of the general preaching and of the letters of the Apostle. It is not very conspicuous in the discourses reported in the Acts ; but this is accounted for by their evidently exceptional character, intended, as the selection of them is, to illustrate the bearing of the Apostle in the great crises of his life. There are but six in all ; omitting those spoken in self defence, there are but three ; one, suggested by the idolatry of Athens, on the spirituality and unity of God ;* one, to a congregation of Jews, in which he attempts to convince them of the Messiahship of Jesus by a comparison of Messianic prophe-

* Acts xvii. 22-31.

cies with the circumstances of His death and resurrection, and in which he declares the forgiveness of sins to be dependent on the work of Christ;* and one to the Elders at Miletus,—an exhortation to pastoral fidelity, patterned after the example he had given them, and sustained by the solemn consideration that the church of which they were overseers the Lord had “purchased with his own blood.”† And, further, all these addresses, except that to the Ephesian Elders, were spoken to hearers who were not Christians. It is evident, then, that these discourses afford no indication of the general character of the Apostle’s ministry, of his way of dealing with the penitent and inquiring, or of his education of the newly-formed churches in the truths of the Christian religion. For information on these points we must turn to his letters. There we find, not only the advanced teaching which he gave to Christians of mature experience, but descriptions of his way of winning souls and of feeding the infancy of faith.

In reviewing his ministry at Corinth, he says he had been sent “to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. * * * But we preach Christ crucified. * * * For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”‡ He gives in brief the same account of his preaching to the Galatians, before whose eyes he had set forth Jesus Christ, as if visibly crucified before them. || There is no room for doubt that this was his theme wherever he preached the Gospel, in the synagogues, the market-places, the houses of friends, from Damascus to Rome. He further tells us what feelings were aroused in his hearers by this preaching of the Cross, by the emphasis which he laid not only on the fact, but on the manner, the infamous and degrading manner, of Jesus’ death: for we may assume Corinth to be no exception in this particular. “The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness * * * to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness.”§

* Acts xiii. 16–41.

† 1 Cor. i. 17–23—ii. 2.

§ 1 Cor. i. 18–23.

‡ Acts xx. 17–35.

|| Gal. iii. 1.

The unspeakable shame of the Cross may account for the feeling of the Jew, if Paul identified Jesus with Messiah, but it does not explain the derision of the Gentile. As a good man's proof of his sincerity and goodness, it could have offended none. As a wrong inflicted on the innocent by the hands of malice, it could only have aroused indignation against Jewish injustice and cruelty, and pity for a good man's fate. As a martyr's final testimony to his high and heroic faith, to the sincerity of his motives, to the importance of his message, it could only have excited admiration of a self-denial and fortitude, at that time rare in the Greco-Roman world. It could not, then, have been these aspects of the Cross that appeared prominently in the preaching of Paul. It was, it must have been, the explanation which he put upon the Cross, the relation in which he made it stand to his hearers and to the world, that provoked the scorn of Grecian culture, and the hatred of Pharisees and priests.

And why, we may ask, finding such feelings aroused by his manner of presenting the Gospel, did he persist in his course? Why, after his reasonings with the wise men of Athens, meeting them upon their own ground, and laying a basis in philosophy for his Christian conception of the Godhead, and the unsatisfactory result, did he go on to Corinth with the firm resolve to have no theme but "Christ and Him crucified," and never afterward alter that resolve? To win men to Christ was the supreme purpose of his life: he gave up all for it; he bore all things for it; he "took pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake."* Yet his message wins ten, but alienates a hundred. He was not needlessly severe or offensive in his speech. He was not a narrow-minded bigot, standing upon trifles and contending for things non-essential to the Christian faith. He was courteous in his treatment of all men and skilful in conciliating opponents. He was ready to make concessions to the prejudices of others when no principle was compromised, even at the risk of his own reputation for consistency. He would have made any personal sacrifice that "the

* 2 Cor. xii. 10.

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offence of the Cross might cease." But the Cross continues to be so peculiarly prominent in his preaching that everything in Christianity that is beautiful and attractive to the natural mind—and surely there is much—is forgotten in the scorn and hatred aroused by the doctrines of the Cross. "Nothing," says Dean Stanley, "shows the confidence of the Apostle more strongly than the prominence which he gives to an aspect of his teaching so unpopular."* This may be true; but it is more evidently true that nothing shows more strongly that St. Paul believed the Cross to be the most important fact in the Gospel, and that Christ upon the Cross held a unique relation to the world, and one of supreme importance.

But, it is said, "while the Apostle lays great stress upon the death of Christ, * * * he lays tenfold more emphasis on the resurrection:"† "This, and not the cross with its supposed effects, is the grand object to which they (the Apostles) call the attention and the faith of their hearers."‡ It is of course true that, like Peter in Jerusalem after Pentecost, Paul in Antioch and Athens and Corinth, preached unto the people "Jesus and the Resurrection." And why not? The resurrection is a glorious fact, and on any theory of the death of Christ, it is the one transcendent miracle on which, as on a sure foundation, the whole Christian fabric rests. The Jews knew that Jesus had died upon the Cross, and there was no difficulty in securing the belief of it among the Gentiles. The resurrection was the remarkable, the wonderful, the incredible fact. That Jesus had died, died by public execution, died upon the cross, by itself proved nothing in his favour, but was, *prima facie*, evidence against his claims. But the resurrection "proved him to be the Son of God with power,"§ and was necessarily dwelt upon by the personal witnesses, as the unanswerable evidence for Christ. Beside this, the resurrection of Jesus "brought life and immortality to light," and in addition to being an argument for Christianity, is one of the media of its

* St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians: A. P. Stanley: 4th edition, p. 46.

† Livermore: Commentary on Romans, p. 65.

‡ Martineau: Studies of Christianity, p. 105.

§ Romans i. 4.

revelations; and he who counted it his duty to declare the whole counsel of God could not ignore the great truths immediately connected with the resurrection of the Lord. There is another reason why he must have dwelt upon it, viz., that he had a special theory of the relation of the death of Jesus to the world. It would have been impossible for him to obtain belief in his doctrine of the death, if he had not been able to assert the resurrection of Jesus; it was almost impossible to gainsay his doctrine, if the resurrection were proved to be a fact.

No, it may be said, there is another reason, and it is inconsistent with those you have been giving: the resurrection, and not the death of Christ, is the ground of justification; and it is on that account the Apostle so often refers to it, and that when "his general description (of faith in Christ) is replaced by a more specific account of this justifying state of mind, it is faith in the Resurrection on which the attention is fastened. * * * He was 'delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.' " * The English translation of the passage thus quoted by the objector may seem to serve his purpose: the Greek original contradicts his theory. As in the translation, so in the original, the same preposition (*dià*) is used twice; and this preposition, in this construction, has the signification given to it in the first part of the English sentence. The same meaning must be preserved in the second part: "Who was delivered *on account of* our offences and was raised *on account of* our justification;" that is, our justification was, not the end, but the cause of His resurrection. Because the atonement of His death was sufficient and accepted of God, God raised Him from the dead. Our sins crucified Him; our accomplished justification raised Him again. †

But if this exposition were doubtful, the commonly accepted reading is not more favourable to the objector's cause, if we read the passage in the light of other Scriptures. If Paul says "He was raised for our justification," he also says, "We are now justified by His blood." ‡ We cannot be, in the same sense, justified

* Martineau: Studies of Christianity, p. 106.

† Godet: Commentary on Romans, IV., 25.

‡ Romans v. 9.

by His blood and justified by His resurrection; and the harmony of the two assertions is found in a third statement of St. Paul, that the resurrection proved Him to be the Son of God, and, by implication, proved the sufficiency of His death as the ground of justification. In other words, justification is obtained for us by the death of Christ—"We are justified by His blood;" justification is realized by us through faith, which has the resurrection for its warrant, but the atoning death for its object—"He was raised for our justification."

There is, then, no fair ground for the assertion that St. Paul lays "tenfold more emphasis on the resurrection" than on the death of Christ. We have had his own declaration that he preached the Cross of Christ; we shall find confirmatory evidence at every step as we go on; and the general tenor and frequency and emphasis of his teaching respecting the death of Christ, must be left to show that, however much he had to say of the resurrection, the Cross was his central theme. A single illustration may conclude this point, and establish our proposition, that the Apostle regarded the Lord as sustaining in His death a unique relation to the world. Wherever the Apostle founded a church he established "the Lord's Supper." The first record of its institution that we possess was made by him.* He did not regard it as a simple symbol of brotherly love, but "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup," he says, "ye do shew the Lord's *death* till He come."†

II. This relation of Christ to the world is more particularly defined by St. Paul to be a relation to *the sins of the world*. "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."‡ "Our Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself for our sins."§ "Jesus our Lord * * who was delivered for our offences."|| "Delivered" (*paradidomi*) is a common expression with St. Paul to describe both the Divine appointment and the self-

* 1 Corinthians xi. 23.

† Verse 26.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 3.

§ Gal. i. 3, 4.

|| Rom. iv. 24, 25.

surrender of Christ to death,* suggested to him perhaps by Isaiah's description of the Servant of Jehovah, whose "soul was delivered to death."†

1. "He was delivered for our offences." "We have here '*dia*' with the accusative, which in sacred and profane authors in the Greek language, is the most common mark of the impulsive cause."‡ In some sense, therefore, which it must be left to subsequent expositions to explain, our sins were *the cause* of the death of Christ.

2. His relation in death to the sins of the world is described under two further particulars. He *bears the sins* of men. This particular expression belongs to Peter rather than to Paul; but in language of great intensity and emphasis Paul asserts the fact—"God hath made Him to be sin for us;"§ "He was "made a curse for us."||

In the former of these passages, the contrast between the sinlessness of Christ and that which God made Him to become, and the antithesis between our righteousness and His sin, require us to regard "sin" as equivalent to "sinful," and exclude the frequent explanation of it as "sin-offering." He was sinless; God made Him sinful: we become righteous before God, because He became sinful for us. The abstract is used for the concrete for the sake of vividness and force. Yet it is not necessary that we regard the Apostle as saying that Christ was actually made sinful, and was punished as a sinner: it is sufficient if we understand that He endured the suffering which sin caused; which sin deserved; which He bore for the sake of the sinful, and which, endured by Him, God accepted as if the sinner had borne it, and as equivalent, for the ends for which it was borne, to the punishment of the sinner himself.

Perhaps the true meaning of this important passage cannot be brought out better than in the words of Grotius: "As the

* Rom. viii. 32. Gal. ii. 20. Eph. v. 2, 25. † Isaiah liii. 12.

‡ Grotius: Defence of the Catholic Faith, translated in the Biblio. Sacra, Vol. 36, page 107.

§ 2 Cor. v. 21. || Gal. iii. 13.

Hebrews employ *sin* for *punishment*, so they also call Him who suffered the punishment, *sin*. * * * Therefore, following this form of speech, Isaiah said of Christ: 'He made His soul sin,' *i. e.*, He exposed His soul to the punishment of sin. In the same way, Paul said, 'He hath made him to be sin for us.' * * Socinus, to escape the authority of the Pauline passage, supposes that by the word *sin* should be understood a man regarded by men as a sinner, but without warrant; for, first, there is no example of such a use of either the Greek or the Hebrew word; again, Paul attributes to God the act of making Christ sin; and, again, this interpretation cannot be adapted to the words of Isaiah which contain a similar phrase. For what Paul says God did, Isaiah ascribes to Christ, that doubtless He made His soul sin, or He made Himself sin. Besides, Paul contrasts sin and righteousness: 'We have been made the righteousness of God,' *i. e.*, we have been justified, or liberated from divine punishment. But that this might be done, Christ was made sin, *i. e.*, suffered the divine punishment. * * * Can it be anything else than that God has inflicted punishment upon the undeserving?"* It is necessary to say that throughout his treatise, Grotius does not use "punishment" in a strict sense, for he did not hold to the penal suffering of Christ, but to the sufferings of Christ substituted for the penalty of sin.

The other passage, "being made a curse for us," is virtually equivalent to the last. The form differs; the matter is the same. This is a more direct assertion of what the former intends, that Christ bore the consequences of sin, the curse, that which, when inflicted on the sinner, is the expression of the wrath of God; and that He did so upon the cross. We must not explain away these solemn words, but take them in their obvious meaning. There is no figure in this passage. It is a real deliverance that is effected by the real bearing of a real curse. Nor need we shrink from this representation of the work of Christ, if only we are careful not to import into the Apostle's language ideas which he does not express. He does not say or imply that Christ

* Grotius: Defence of the Catholic Faith: Bib. Sac., Vol. 36, p. 121.

was the object of the anger of God when He bore the sins of men : on the other hand, he says that in that awful hour of Atonement, when He fully came under the weight of that curse which He had assumed, and when He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" even then he was a "sweet smelling offering and sacrifice to God."* The oft-quoted words of Luther, in his comment on this verse, in which he speaks of Christ as a sinner in every kind and to every degree, and therefore as bearing the wrath of God, are shocking indeed. But there is reason to think he did not speak literally, but only carried out in multiplied expressions the Apostle's form of speech : "He made Him to be sin," "He became a curse." For Luther says: "These sentences may, indeed, be well expounded after this manner: Christ is made a curse, that is to say, a sacrifice for the curse; and sin, that is, a sacrifice for sin : yet in my judgment it is better to keep the proper signification of the words, because there is *a greater force and vehemency* therein. For when a sinner cometh to the knowledge of himself indeed, he feeleth not only that he is miserable, but misery itself; not only that he is a sinner, and is accursed, but even sin and malediction itself. For it is a terrible thing to bear sin, the wrath of God, malediction and death. Wherefore, that man which hath a true feeling of these things, (as Christ did truly and effectually feel them for all mankind,) is made even sin, death and a curse."†

3. A third particular in St. Paul's conception of the relation of Christ, in his death, to the sins of the world, is that He *delivers men from sin*, from the guilt of sin, and from God's wrath and penalties.

Sometimes both the humiliation of Christ and the advantage arising from it to men are presented in a very general way, as when he says: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."‡ But usually he particularizes the blessings, and connects them immediately with the

* Eph. v. 2.

†Luther: Commentary on Galatians iii. 13.

‡2 Cor. viii. 9.

death of Christ: "He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world."* He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity."† This is salvation in the present time. On the other hand, he saves us from the future penalty of sin. He "delivered us from the wrath to come."‡ He "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made—because he was made—a curse for us."§ "Being now justified by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him."|| And, not to multiply quotations, we "obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."¶ The Greek, in this last passage, expresses more directly than the translation, the connection between His dying for us and our obtaining salvation. For the participial phrase, (*tou apothanontos hyper hēmōn*), as Crawford remarks, "has the force of the well known Latin phrase, 'quippe qui,' "** and may be translated "in as much as," i. e., "because he died for us." These passages make it plain that Paul connects the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with the death of Christ as their ground and cause.

4. In describing His relation to the world and its sins, Paul further speaks of the Lord as *a substitute*, taking the place of sinners, suffering and dying in their stead.

The Greek prepositions used by the Apostle are worthy of consideration; for, if no confident argument can be based on them alone, the context often invests them with important meaning. The three prepositions occurring in this connection (*peri*, *hyper*, *anti*), and all translated "for," have different meanings and denote different relations. "*Anti*" means "instead of," and must be so understood. It is used by the Lord when he says of himself that He came "to give His life a ransom for many;" †† where both the preposition and the figure involve the idea of substitution. It is also used by St. Paul when he says

* Gal. i. 4.

† Titus ii. 14.

‡ 1 Thes. i. 10.

§ Gal. iii. 13.

|| Rom. v. 9.

¶ 1 Thes. v. 9, 10.

** Crawford: Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement, third ed., p. 55.

†† Matt. xx. 28.

the Lord "gave Himself a ransom for all;,"* where the noun and preposition are used as a compound word (*anti-lutron*), and "the idea of an exchange, which lies in the substantive itself, gains special force from the preposition."†

Of the other two prepositions one, (*peri*), means "concerning," "on account of," "in behalf of," but never "instead of." It is used by Paul when he speaks of Christ's relation to sin, where the idea of substitution would be inadmissible; but never when he speaks of His relation to sinners, where the idea would be proper. Here he invariably uses "*hyper*," which means both "in behalf of" and "instead of." That Paul is aware of this second sense, and sometimes intends it, is clear from his statement to Philemon: "I would have retained Onesimus with me, that in thy stead (*hyper sou*) he might have ministered unto me."‡ But in every instance the nature of the case or the context must determine the sense of the preposition. When Paul says "We are ambassadors for Christ" — "We pray you in Christ's stead, (*hyper Christou*),"§ the nature of the case settles the meaning: it must be "in the place of." So in the passage, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die,"|| the nature of the case requires us to understand "in the place of." For, a man does not die for another as a gratuitous manifestation of his love, but in his place, to save him from death or some calamity terrible as death. And when Paul goes on to say, "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," he instances a parallel case, which must be a case of substitution.

In other instances the context settles the meaning. When Paul says "one died for all,"¶ some uncertainty may attach to the clause taken alone; but when he adds the inference, "then all died," he fixes upon the preposition the sense of substitution. And this account of his meaning is borne out by the fact that this word is found in the New Testament, upon the lips of speakers of every station and character, in connection with the

* 1 Tim. ii. 6.

† Lange's Commentary, in *Loco*.

‡ Philemon, 13.

§ 2 Cor. v. 20.

|| Rom. v. 7.

¶ 2 Cor. v. 14.

substitution of life for life. When the Lord says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for (*hyper*) his friends,"* there can be no doubt of his meaning: He extols, as the noblest act of self-sacrificing love, the giving of one's life to save the life of one's friend. When Peter, in the ardour of his devotion says, "I will lay down my life for thee (*hyper sou*),"† he certainly means that he is ready to die in his Master's stead. When Caiaphas declares "It is expedient that one man should die for the people,"‡ we could have no doubt of his meaning even if it were not added, "that the whole nation perish not." And when John affirms that the High Priest spoke by an inspiration himself did not recognize, he both explains the meaning of the priest's prophetic words, and records his own doctrine of the vicariousness of Jesus' death: "He prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation and not for that nation only."§ Thus we see that this preposition, while not necessarily involving the idea of substitution, yet, from the nature of the subject and in the connections in which it stands, expresses it with sufficient precision.

But it is not necessary to rest the weight of the argument for substitution upon the meaning of a preposition. Apart altogether from its significance, it is impossible to give any other meaning to many of the passages in which it is found. This has been made plain in the foregoing, and it is not worth while to repeat at length. When St. Paul illustrates the greatness of God's love by comparing His sending of His Son to death for sinners, to the devotion of the man who sacrifices his life to avert a good man's death, substitution is the unavoidable inference: it is life in the place of life, in the one case as in the other. Had Paul said no more than that Christ was made a curse for us, we could have inferred no more than that he suffered in our interest; but when he also says that we were under a curse, and have been saved from it by Christ's being made a curse, it is not an inference, but a paraphrase, to say that He stood in our place and suffered and died in our stead. And so, also, when Paul says that Christ was

* John xv. 13.

† John xiii. 37.

‡ John xi. 50.

§ John xi. 51-52.

"made sin for us,"—sin, in the sense already explained; for he puts the Lord in vicarious relation to us, by adding that by His endurance of what sin brought upon Him, we are made the righteousness of God, are justified, are saved from the penalty of sin. He who by suffering saves another from the suffering otherwise inevitable, must suffer in that other's place.

5. At the same time, St. Paul represents the Lord as coming into this relation to man and his sin through the prompting of His own love, and as bearing in His humiliation, His sorrows, His death, a really *voluntary part*. Without necessity and without constraint, "He gave Himself for our sins."* It was a manifestation of His own grace that "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor."† "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me."‡ "Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us."§ He "loved the church, and gave Himself for it."||

Such is Paul's account of the relation of Christ *to the world*, in His sufferings and death.

III. On the other hand, he represents Him as sustaining, in the Atonement of His death, a relation to God.

Three particulars may be named:

1. He dies *by God's appointment*. "It is appointed unto men once to die;" but in the view of St. Paul, everything connected with the death of Christ,—the end, the time, the means, the circumstances,—is by divine decree. He "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."¶ "God hath appointed" the end, "to obtain salvation," and the means, "by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us."** God made Him the sinner's substitute, and laid upon Him the burden of sin and its atoning woe: for "He hath made Him to be sin for us."†† God appointed the whole course and character of the Redeeming history: for "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent

* Gal. i. 4.

† 2 Cor. viii. 9.

‡ Gal. ii. 20.

§ Eph. v. 2.

|| Eph. v. 25.

¶ Gal. i. 4.

** 1 Thess. v. 9, 10.

†† 2 Cor. v. 21.

forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."*

2. He dies *as the result and expression of the love of God to man*. "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."†

3. He dies *to illustrate and honour the justice of God*, and so to make possible the exercise of mercy toward sinful men: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."‡ The full consideration of this great passage is deferred to a subsequent stage of the discussion.

Meanwhile, the foregoing may, I think, be called a complete summing and an accurate classification of the Pauline passages relating to the Atonement. It is, perhaps, liable to the charge of being commonplace, and of being based on old and familiar interpretations of the Sacred Text. It may, on that account, be more confidently claimed for it that it represents the mind of the Apostle, than if it rested on novelties of exegesis. Recent attempts in our own language, elaborate and ingenious as some of them have been, to put new meanings into the Apostle's words, in the interest of modern theories of the Atonement, confirm a remark of that great philologist and exegete, Heinrich Meyer, with reference to the theological literature of Germany: "Long experience and observation in this field of scientific inquiry have taught me that—after there have been expended upon the New Testament, the labours of the learning, the acuteness, the mastery of Scripture, and the pious insight of eighteen centuries—new interpretations, undiscerned hitherto by the minds most conversant with such studies, are destined, as a rule, speedily to perish and be deservedly forgotten. I am distrustful of such exegetical discoveries, and those of the present day are not of a kind to lessen my distrust."§

* Gal. iv. 4, 5. † Rom. v. 8. See also Titus ii. 11-14; iii. 4-7.

‡ Romans iii. 25, 26.

§ Meyer: Com. on Corinthians, Clark's Trans., vol. 1, p. ix. note.

IV. In passages included in the foregoing summary, St. Paul describes the atoning work of Christ by several *general terms*; each of which gathers up some of the particulars already specified, while giving prominence perhaps to one; and all of which taken together present a very full view of his doctrine of the Atonement.

1. One of these general terms is *Sacrifice*, the comparison being at one time with sacrifice as appointed by the Mosaic ritual, and, at another, with sacrifice as a religious institution of the world.

We have the former when, having exhorted the church at Corinth to purify herself by casting out the old leaven, he adds: "For *our* Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ."* This is a proof of the propriety of the exhortation, and a motive for obeying it. It is not an accidental comparison suggested by the figure of leaven already used, but one founded in a real and divinely intended similitude: it is type and anti-type. Paul says, there is a true analogy between your position and duty, and those of the Hebrew family celebrating the Passover and putting away all leaven from the dwelling; for there is not only a general likeness, but in one particular, and that the chief, your position is the same: "Our passover also has been sacrificed, even Christ." This is not only an illustrative reference, comparing things that differ: it is a descriptive illustration, presenting the feature in which two things are alike. This view of the Apostle's words is justified by other passages of the New Testament; by the coincidence of the Lord's passion with the time of the Paschal celebration;† by His own substitution of the memorial of His death and the great deliverance it wrought, for the annual commemoration of the first Passover and the ancient redemption;‡ by St. John's assertion that the Scriptures which described the offering of the Paschal Lamb were fulfilled in the circumstances of the death of Christ.§

*1 Cor. v. 7. Revised version.

† Luke xxii. 15-20.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 17.

§ John xix. 36

What, then, is that feature in which the Paschal Lamb and our Lord are alike? One word of the text states it: both were offered in sacrifice. This verb (*thuo*) may be used in the sense of "to kill" without reference to the purpose, and is so used in the New Testament: * its proper meaning is "to kill in sacrifice;" in classic Greek it is a word of the altar only; and it is used in this sense, in the only place beside this, where Paul employs it, † and in that part of the narrative of St. Luke which relates to St. Paul and would be derived from him. ‡ Was the Passover, then, a sacrifice? It is true it was not offered in the first instance under the usual conditions of sacrifice, but the necessities of the case account for that. In its original celebration, however, it was a true sacrifice, and produced the appropriate effect, securing the "passing over" of those who presented it, when the judgment of Jehovah went through the land. In all subsequent observations the same character was recognized: for it was appointed as a part of the Passover ritual forever, that when the children should ask, "What mean ye by this service?" the fathers should answer, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover." § Other passages are as explicit as this. ||

On the other hand, St. Paul illustrates the nature of the Lord's death by comparing it with the offerings made throughout the world, in Gentile and in Hebrew religion, under the general institution of sacrifice: "Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." ¶ Here are used two terms, *prosphora* and *thusia*, of undoubtedly sacrificial import, the former being a name for offerings of all kinds; the latter, for sacrifices in which atoning blood is shed. The same idea is involved in the description of Christ as a propitiation or propitiatory sacrifice (*hilasterion*). **

* Luke xv. 23, 27.

† 1 Cor. x. 20.

‡ Acts xiv. 13, 18.

§ Ex. xii. 26, 27.

|| Ex. xxiii. 18; xxxiv. 25. Deut. xvi. 2, 4, 5, 6.

¶ Eph. v. 2.

** Rom. iii. 25.

The nature and intention of Sacrifice in general in the ancient world, there is no need to explain. We have but to put ourselves in the place of readers in Ephesus and Rome, and ask how they must have understood such accounts of the death of the Lord. For we are not to suppose that Paul was uttering words with hidden meanings, for the curiosity and criticism of future ages to discover, but that these letters were more immediately intelligible to them who first read or heard them than they are to us, because they had before their eyes the social, moral, and religious conditions to which they referred, and which lighted up their meaning. Jews would interpret such teachings in the light of their own Scriptures and their traditional ideas: Gentiles, who had been the devotees of religions which, differ as they may in other respects, had the sacrificial character in common, would understand the language of the Apostle in the substantial sense in which they had been accustomed to employ it. It is conceded to us that "the words used in these passages, if found in ordinary Greek literature, might, without question, imply that very doctrine of propitiation which"—as the author I am quoting thinks—"it seems to be the very object of the revelation of God to destroy;"* and the use of them is defended on the ground that the Apostles could not invent a vocabulary, but must employ words familiar to those to whom they wrote; that thus they were "obliged to use language that was already saturated with falsehood; and which could not fail to convey those associations which were precisely the errors which a Divine revelation was intended to remove."† But by what was the necessity imposed? By the subject of which they treated? or the language in which they wrote? If there was no parallel between the death of Christ and the sacrifices of the ancient world, if the chief ideas involved in both were not the same, surely it was not necessary to employ the language of the one to describe the other. If the Atonement of Christ was only an appeal of the love of God to

* Kirkus: *Orthodoxy, Scripture, and Reason*, p. 163. See also Bushnell: *Vicarious Sacrifice*, p. 522; *Forgiveness and Law*, p. 81.

† Kirkus: *Orthodoxy, &c.*, p. 163.

the heart of man, it was possible to say so without the use of these misleading words. Love was not an idea foreign to ancient thought; manifestations of it by acts of kindness were not uncommon in the social life of Greece and Rome: and there was a language in daily use to express such ideas and describe such conduct, which did not belong to the altar, nor remind those who used it of avenging deities and propitiatory rites. Our modern opponents of vicarious sacrifice do not find it difficult to define their various theories without the employment of the dangerous words; and the difference between them and the sacred writers is hardly to be explained by the affluence of English and the poverty of Greek. If the sacred writers themselves had given any caution against ideas which their words would inevitably suggest, they would have prevented a long history of error, and saved the church from many a controversy; and it was the least they could have done. But we find St. Paul, with all his zeal for the truth, with all his indignation at any departure from the pure gospel of Christ, with all his care of statement and labour of argument, employing language which, he must have known, would mislead his readers, and—if he could have foreseen—would mislead the church for eighteen hundred years; and doing so, without the utterance of one warning word.

The comparison of this language of the New Testament with the anthropological language in which God is spoken of in the Old, does not support the argument of the objector. That language was used by poet, priest, and prophet, not only because the limitations of human thought and speech made it necessary, but because, when it is discharged of its materialism—which, be it remembered, the Jews did not infer from it—it directly expresses a sublime truth, the only view of God which can satisfy the intellect or heart of man. Not only can we form no conception of personality which is not suggested by our own nature; but personality in God and personality in man must, so far as they lie parallel, be the same. Personality in God may infinitely transcend personality in man, but it must include it. It must be that as truly as it must be more. No better proof of this can

be demanded than the fact that all attempts to be rid of the anthropological language and conception, end in the abandonment of personality, and the adoption of pantheism, or the "power not ourselves which makes for righteousness," or some other of the abstractions which modern speculation proposes as "ideal substitutes for God." In both the instances thus compared,—God's mode of Being, Christ's work of Salvation,—and their expression in the speech of men, it was the idea that demanded the language, and not the language that created the idea.

2. Another of these general terms is employed when Paul attributes to Christ the effecting of *Redemption*.

This term (*apolutrosis*) may be used for deliverance, however accomplished, or for deliverance by the payment of a ransom. The latter is the etymological and primary sense; and in this sense Paul uses it to describe the nature and effect of the work of Christ. It is his favorite illustration; he uses it with great frequency, and carries out the metaphor into many details.

Early in the history of the church, influential teachers, forgetting that this is but one illustration out of many, and carrying it into particulars where the Apostle did not lead them, framed a doctrine of Atonement which taught that Christ paid a ransom to the devil, and which continued to be generally held for a thousand years, until the great intellect of Anselm gave currency to a more Scriptural view. It is, no doubt, with particular reference to this subject that Macaulay says: "From the time of Irenaeus and Origen down to the present day, there has not been a single generation in which great divines have not been led into the most absurd expositions of Scripture, by mere incapacity to distinguish analogies proper, to use the scholastic phrase, from analogies metaphorical."* To which class does Paul's figure of redemption belong? to the proper or the metaphorical, the rational or the fanciful? to "analogies which are arguments," or "analogies which are mere illustrations?" The argument of Coleridge, endeavoring to show that this and other terms describe solely the effect for man of the work of Christ,† assumes that it is a meta-

* Essay on Lord Bacon.

† Coleridge: *Aids to Reflection*, Harpers' ed., pp. 307-317.

phorical analogy, and also that the word "redemption" is used in its weaker sense of deliverance simply. If St. Paul had used the figure of redemption as a passing illustration and without added particulars, it might not have been easy to answer this and similar reasoning. But his use of the figure is so frequent and so particular, that there can be no doubt that he describes both the deliverance accomplished for man and the method by which it was effected. For, he not only speaks in general terms of "the redemption which is Christ Jesus,"* and indicates from what He has redeemed men, "from all iniquity,"† "from the curse of the law,"‡ but he asserts the reality of the redemption by declaring that a real ransom was given, and by telling what that ransom was: "Ye are bought with a price;"§ "We have redemption through His blood;"|| "He hath purchased His church with His own blood."¶ This representation leaves no doubt that St. Paul regarded the Atonement of Christ, effected by His death, as an objective fact and the condition of man's forgiveness, and not as a subjective process accomplished in the heart of man.

3. A third general term, in which St. Paul describes the work of Christ, and one peculiar to him in this connection, is *Reconciliation*.

The most important passage in which this account is given of the redeeming work, is the closing part of the fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians. This and other passages** containing the same form of expression, are often appealed to as teaching that the Atonement is a subjective work,—the bringing of man into harmony with God by the soul-renewing power of Christ's self-sacrificing love. It is not God that is reconciled—they say,—it is man; there is no propitiation, changing God's feeling and attitude towards men; there is a subduing and transforming power flowing from the Cross, and changing man from enmity to love, and this is the Atonement: "We were reconciled to God;" "God hath reconciled us to Himself;" "God was in

* Rom. iii. 24.

† Titus ii. 14.

‡ Gal. iii. 13.

§ 1 Cor. vi. 20; vii. 23.

|| Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14.

¶ Acts xx. 28.

** Rom. v. 10, 11. Eph. ii. 16. Col. i. 20, 21.

Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." Plausible as this reasoning may seem, it is based upon a very superficial interpretation of the Apostle's words.

Reconciliation implies two parties, and a reciprocal work. Where one side of the mutual work, and one of the parties to it, are made prominent, it may be the party that has been wronged and his disposition to forgive: and this, even when the form of expression attributes the reconciliation to the other, the offending side. It is almost, perhaps quite, always so in Scripture. Take, for example, Lev. vi. 30, where a word usually rendered "to make atonement," is translated "to reconcile," and the reference is plainly to the propitiation of the offended party.* When the Lord tells him who brings his gift to the altar, and remembers that he is not in true fraternal relations with his brother, to go and "first be reconciled,"† the meaning must be that he is to seek his brother's forgiveness; for, first, it is said, "if thou rememberest that *thy brother hath aught against thee*;" and, second, if he were required only to lay aside his own angry feeling, he could do so at the altar; but he is told to go and be reconciled.

Turn now to the passages in which Paul uses this term in description of the "Redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and it will be found that the reconciliation—whatever may be the form of expression—must be understood of God. "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son:"‡ he is speaking of a time antecedent to our faith, and even our knowledge of Christ. At that time Christ's death did not, it could not, remove the enmity of man's heart against God: yet it actually effected reconciliation. This, then, can only mean that it put away God's displeasure, or lifted the just sentence of His law from the destiny of man. Further: "reconciliation" and "salvation" are distinguished, the certainty of the latter being inferred from the reality of the former, and surely this requires the same interpretation: for the hope of salvation is war-

* See also 1 Sam. xxix. 4. Ezek. xlv. 15, 17.

† Rom. v. 10.

‡ Matt. v. 23, 24.

ranted, not by our consciousness of being friendly towards God, but by our knowledge that He is friendly towards us. And, yet further, this verse is clearly an emphatic repetition, in varied phraseology and more formal argument, of the thought contained in the verse preceding: "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." The two are parallel, and one must interpret the other. The justification of the ninth verse and the reconciliation of the tenth, though not precisely, are yet substantially the same: both objective; one, the gift, the other, the attitude, of God; the latter, like the former, implying the removal of God's displeasure from us, not the change of our feeling towards God.

Coming now to the great passage which these references are intended to illustrate,* we find that it includes and distinguishes both parts of the reciprocal work of reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling *the world* unto Himself:" it was a reconciliation affecting all equally. "He hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation:" it is now proclaimed that men may avail themselves of it. "God *hath* reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ:" it was done once for all, and we took no part in it. "Be ye reconciled to God:" this remains to be done, and we must be actors now. The reconciliation of God, previous to reconciliation in man, is further emphasized by a statement of its nature—"not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and of its ground—"he hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." The teaching of the whole passage is clear and positive, that reconciliation is primarily a change in God's relation to men, effected by the Atonement of Christ, and that "the individual reconciliation to God is no other than the personal assumption of the benefit of the general reconciliation."†

A recent Unitarian writer gives a candid interpretation of this teaching of Paul. "It was only a part of what Paul taught * * * that Jesus reconciled man to God. It was the experience of the Christian world that God also had been reconciled

* 2 Cor. v. 18-21.

† Pope: Compendium of Christian Theology, II., 287.

to us. * * * It was not that in their understanding of Him, God had been changed, but that His relation to man had changed." * How then does he harmonize the teaching of the Apostle with his own doctrine as a Unitarian? He does not attempt to do so, but saves his own creed by disowning the authority of the Apostle, and by claiming, as I understand him, for himself and his fellow-believers, a spiritual development beyond that of the man in whom Christ had been revealed: "We may not feel any more the need of such comfort, but Paul and his world did feel it; and there is a world far larger than our religious household which feels it to-day." †

All the passages, except one, in which St. Paul treats directly of Atonement, have been included in the foregoing expositions; and we might now give a full and accurate summary of his doctrine. But the method by which we have been proceeding may be objected to, and our conclusions declared invalid because founded on interpretations of isolated texts. Paul would not "recognize," says a Unitarian commentator, "or own as his writings, Epistles crumpled up, almost without regard to construction, into chapters and verses; * * * when read, read piecemeal, as if they constituted a charm; when quoted, quoted in fragments, broken from their place and connection, to point a sentence or prop up a doctrine, as if they were independent proverbs, not closely jointed links of a living and inseparable body. There is no part of the sacred Scriptures so much injured by this mode of treatment as the long sentences and close argumentation of the Apostle Paul." ‡

To meet this objection, and to show that the general tenor of the Apostle's writings involves the doctrine of Atonement which particular passages have appeared to state, the consideration of one of them has been hitherto omitted, that we may now examine the greatest of texts in its connection in the greatest of arguments and the greatest of books.

* Dr. Rufus Ellis in the Unitarian Review, January 1882, p. 16.

† Unitarian Review, January 1882, p. 17.

‡ Livermore: Commentary on Romans, p. 60.

V. Among all passages of the Scriptures which treat either of Atonement or Justification, the *locus classicus* is Rom. iii. 24-26, a passage which derives its importance not only from the fulness of its own statement, but from its relation to the discussion in which it stands.

Paul had long desired to visit Rome* that he might see the church founded by his own disciples, that he might have direct fruits of his ministry in Rome also, and that he might build up a powerful Christian organization in the Capital of the Empire, whose influence on the fortunes of Christianity in the West he could not but foresee. The long-deferred hope may be near its fulfilment. When he shall have gone to Jerusalem with the collection made in Macedonia and Greece, his ministry in the East will for the present be ended; and then he proposes to travel to the western limits of civilization, carrying the Gospel into Spain, and taking Rome by the way.† But the future is uncertain, and he goes "bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall him there."‡ Whether his hope of a personal ministry in Rome is realized or not, he feels it important that his teaching should be fully known there, and have the seal of his own authority. Perhaps also he desires, before it is too late, to put the cardinal doctrines of his Gospel in such formal order and permanent record as may guard the interests of the churches and the vital truths of Christianity, after he has finished his course.§ No special circumstances in the Roman church decide the matter or the form of his letter. There are no heresies there which he will refute. He writes in no polemic spirit, except as the unceasing conflict between Jewish Christianity and his own, gave a polemic cast to his ministry in general. He writes with deliberate intention to give full and formal statement of "the Gospel, as to which his disciples had already instructed them, in the entire connection of its constituent fundamental principles."||

* Rom. i. 10-13.

† Rom. xv. 23-25.

‡ Acts xx. 22.

§ Rom. xv. 15, 16.

|| Meyer: Commentary on Romans, Vol. 1, p. 31.

1. The theme of the doctrinal division of the letter is explicitly stated at the beginning: it is "the Righteousness of God" which is by faith and is revealed in the Gospel.* The citation immediately made from the Old Testament—"the just shall live by faith"—requires that we understand "the righteousness of God," not as an attribute of God, but as an ethical relation to God, "the relation of being right into which man is put by God."† That this righteousness which is of God (*i. e.* from God) is a relation to God's law, opposed to the natural relation of guilt and exposure to penalty, and not a state of personal holiness, is to be held as certain. It is implied in the contrast immediately stated in the parallel clauses: "the righteousness of God is revealed," "the wrath of God is revealed." It is evidently the sense of the phrase where, in illustration of the very topic which this verse proposes, Paul cites the great typical case of Abraham, who "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness;"‡ and where, by quoting the words of David which, he says, "describe the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness"—"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered"—he makes righteousness synonymous with the forgiveness of sins.§ The one convincing proof of this, however, is the general tenor of the argument we are now to trace.¶

The necessity of some special interposition of Divine grace to effect this righteousness, is the first point to be proved: and it is proved by the portrayal of the wickedness, guilt, and ruin of the world. Among the Gentiles, the law of nature and the natural conscience has been disobeyed, and through disobedience, obscured, until the whole Gentile world has so far fallen as to have "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator."¶ This degradation of their very religions has its counterpart in the degradation of

* Rom. i. 16, 17. † Meyer, *in loco*. ‡ Rom. iv. 1-3. § Rom. iv. 6, 7.

¶ For a similar analysis of St. Paul's argument, made with the same purpose and in fuller detail, see *The Atonement*: R. W. Dale, M. A.; Lecture VI., pp. 225-249.

¶ Rom. i. 19-25.

social and private life, in the wide-spread prevalence of vices whose very mention sullies the Apostle's page.* Yet the Gentiles retain sufficient of the light of conscience to be invested with the character of moral responsibility, and to bear the sense of guilt: for they "know the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death," and yet "not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."†

And what of the Jew? He has some advantage over the Gentile, for "unto him were committed the oracles of God."‡ He is aware of the advantage, and proud of it: "he rests upon the law, and makes his boast of God, and is confident that he is a light to them that are in darkness."§ But God does not approve men for their knowledge, or condemn them for their ignorance:¶ He "will render to every man according to his deeds."¶ If, while teaching others, he does not teach himself; if, while boasting of the law, he breaks the law, the Jew disbelieves God, and circumcision itself becomes the sign of guilt.** What, then, are the facts in regard to him? Is he better than others who have not the law? So far from this, the picture given of the corruption of the Gentile world is a mirror in which he may see himself: "he that judges the other condemns himself, for he does the same things."†† Let his own Scriptures describe the state of both: "There is none righteous, * * * they have all gone out of the way, * * * there is no fear of God before their eyes."‡‡ The Jew cannot evade the voice of the accuser, for what his Scriptures say, they say to him: "Whosoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law."§§ Thus, "the whole world is guilty before God, and by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight."¶¶

With what feeling, then, must God regard the world? How will He, how must He treat it? The Apostle gives the terrible answer: "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,"¶¶ of the Gentile of

* Rom. i. 26-31.

† Rom. i. 32.

‡ Rom. iii. 2.

§ Rom. ii. 17-29

¶ Rom. ii. 12-16.

¶¶ Rom. ii. 6.

** Rom. ii. 21-23.

†† Rom. ii. 1.

‡‡ Rom. iii. 10-18.

§§ Rom. iii. 19.

¶¶ Rom. iii. 19, 20.

¶¶ Rom. i. 18.

course, but of the Jew even more; for he, by the abuse of superior privileges, "*treasures* up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."* Such are the guilt, the condemnation, and the doom of the entire world.

And now, to this world is revealed a "righteousness of God," "apart from the law," "through faith in Jesus Christ."† What is this righteousness? How is it effected? Does it conserve the honour of God, while it reveals His love? We have reached the climax of the Apostle's argument, and we may expect a formal and careful statement of the glorious truth. He makes it in the fullest expression of his doctrine of the Atonement to be found in all his writings: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."‡

Here we have, first, a brief statement that justification, or the righteousness hitherto spoken of, is a free gift of the grace of God; and then a much longer statement of the medium through which it is conferred, "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Now, let it be remembered, that the salvation for which the argument of the Apostle has prepared the way, is an objective gift, not a subjective work. It may issue in a great renewal of man's nature,—the Apostle afterwards shows that it does,—but he has not reached that subject yet; he is now concerned with an outward deliverance, salvation as a fact of history, not salvation as an experience of the heart. It is salvation from "the wrath of God" which "is revealed from heaven," from the "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish [that shall come] upon every soul of man that doeth evil;" and this salvation has been gained by Jesus Christ. An objective Atonement, there-

* Rom. ii. 5, 6, 8, 9.

† Rom. iii. 21, 22.

‡ Rom. iii. 23-26.

fore, made once for all, is the logical issue of the Apostle's argument.

That this salvation is by a judgment of God, changing the legal relations of men, and not by the Spirit of God changing their character; that it is a purely objective work, and therefore inconsistent with that view of the Atonement which represents it as having for its only end the renewal of the life of men, is further made clear by the important connection between the twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses, for: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "To come short of," means "to be destitute of." The same word (*hustereo*) is found in such passages as "One thing thou lackest,"* "He began to be in want,"† "Lest any man fail of the grace of God,"‡ "The glory (*doxa*) of God" is the praise, the favour of God, as in the passages, "How can ye believe which receive honour (*doxan*) one of another?"§ "They loved the praise (*doxan*) of men more than the praise (*doxan*) of God."|| Then, also, the change of tense is noticeable; "all *have* sinned" (a past fact), and "all *are* destitute (a present want) of the favour of God." Now, this present need is met and filled by God's grace: "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The conclusion is inevitable that St. Paul is here contemplating, not the change of man's disposition toward God, but the restoration of man to the favour of God, and that, not by the renewal of his character, but, notwithstanding his character, on the ground of the Atonement of Christ.

The nature and relations of that Atonement he proceeds to explain. It was provided by the love and wisdom of God: "Whom God hath set forth," either "designed beforehand," as many critics prefer, or, with our version and modern commentators in general, "set forth publicly." In either case, the death of Christ was not merely the natural result of His collision with the sinful and hostile forces of the world; it was designed by God as "a propitiation" for the sins of man.

No effort of criticism can remove the Sacrificial idea of this word, "propitiation" (*hilasterion*). We may regard it as an

* Mark x. 21. † Luke xv. 14. ‡ Heb. xii. 15. § John v. 44. || John xii. 43.

adjective used substantively, and read, with the Vulgate and the Authorized Version, "a propitiation:" we may treat it as an elliptical expression and supply a substantive, our choice being between two; one (*epithema*) making it "mercy seat," the other (*thuma*) making it "propitiatory sacrifice": or, finally, we may avoid nice questions by retaining the adjective form, and reading, with Morrison, "as propitiatory." Either reading, when modified by the clause "in his blood," contains the idea of sacrifice and the idea of propitiation. For, even if we adopt the rendering "mercy seat," the comparison will imply that as the mercy seat, sprinkled with the blood of Atonement, inspired the Israelite with confidence in the mercy of God, so Christ, sprinkled with His own blood, is the ground and pledge of forgiveness, and the medium of a sinner's approach to God. But there are so many reasons against this view* and in favor of supplying the alternative substantive, that the accomplished Unitarian scholar, Dr. Noyes, translates, "Whom God hath set forth as a propitiatory sacrifice." The position of the expression, "in His blood," does not affect the doctrinal teaching: for whether He was set forth in His blood, or was propitiatory through His blood, or is to be received by faith in His blood, it follows that His blood, or death, is the great propitiatory fact.

Paul then proceeds to declare the purpose of God in the sacrifice of Christ, and the way in which that sacrifice avails for the forgiveness of sins. It is a manifestation, "a practical proof,"† of the righteousness of God in passing over the sins of former times, and in now forgiving those who believe in Jesus Christ. "The righteousness of God" in this place must, of course, be an attribute of God. The following clause, "that He might be just," settles that. But what attribute? It must be His administrative justice, and cannot be His goodness, or veracity, or holiness, as sometimes suggested. The meaning of the Greek word, the usage of the New Testament, the opposition in the fifth verse between "our unrighteousness" and "the righteousness of God," the employment of the phrase in the preceding

* See Meyer, *in loco*.

† Meyer: Commentary, *in loco*.

discussion to denote the right relation of man to law, require that now, when it denotes an attribute or character of God, its meaning shall be "the right relation of God to law," *i. e.*, his rectoral or administrative justice. It is impossible that St. Paul has suddenly introduced an essentially different meaning in the very crisis of his argument. The propitiation of Christ, says Paul, manifests, proves, vindicates the justice of God, and makes it possible "that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth." The commentators often add, "*i. e.*, that He might *be seen* to be just." But why dilute the Apostle's meaning? Is it not the evident implication that God could not *be* just, if He justified men without the propitiation of Christ? The teaching, then, of St. Paul in this great passage is that justification is not the exercise of prerogative, that justice has imperative rights, and that those rights are guarded by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The Atonement is therefore a satisfaction of the justice of God.

3. Having seen the doctrinal import of this passage as fixed by its own terms and required by the argument which culminates in it, let us see if the course of the discussion which succeeds it confirms our exposition.

There immediately follows a defence of faith as the condition of partaking of the benefits of this redemption, illustrated particularly by the case of Abraham;* and then Paul proceeds to sum up the results of this plan of salvation by Christ. He first mentions peace, and a certain hope of salvation for all who believe;† and then, as a second consequence, he infers a possibility of salvation as universal as the effects of Adam's fall: "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."‡ The meaning of this cannot be mistaken; or, at least, our choice must be between two meanings,—the universal possibility and the universal reality of salvation. In either case the Atonement is a universal blessing.

* Rom. iii. 27—iv. 25.

† Rom. v. 1–11.

‡ Rom. v. 18.

On any moral theory of the Atonement, none are benefited by the work of Christ but those to whom it is made known. It conferred no advantage upon the many generations that had lived under the curse before Christ came; it brought no blessing to the multitudes who since then have lived and died in ignorance of Him; and, during the nineteen centuries of Christian history, perhaps not one twentieth of mankind have in any way been benefited by that matchless work of love. But, on Paul's theory, the entire race from Adam to the end has been blessed in Christ. God's forbearance toward the sins that were past was justified in Him; God's forgiveness of sins in the present time is a righteous act through Him; and, to the ends of the earth and to the close of time, a light of hope shines upon the spiritual condition and prospects of mankind: "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." No theory of the work of Christ but one which recognizes an objective Atonement, removing obstacles to salvation, and thus bringing a positive advantage to men independently of faith and of knowledge, can sustain the logic of the Apostle and save his argument from a most impotent conclusion.

From this deduction Paul advances to another, and in the sixth and seventh chapters shows that, not only are the moral character and the godly living of believers not endangered by this method of salvation, but they are made more sure and perfect; and this, because Christ by his work of Atonement both breaks the bondage of sin and inspires new and mighty motives to obedience. There was the more need of his doing this, because it was already slanderously reported that he encouraged immorality by his doctrine, and said "Let us do evil that good may come."* Now, what was the theory of Atonement that suggested such an accusation, and made it necessary in a brief treatise of eleven chapters, handling a high argument and embracing many connected themes, to ask the question, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"† and to devote so long a passage to the answer? The character of the charge is a certificate of the character of the doctrine. If Paul

* Rom. iii. 8.

† Rom. vi. 1.

had taught any of those views of Atonement which exclude its vicarious character, such a charge had been impossible. Had he thought and taught that the Atonement was the appointment of love, but not the requirement of justice; that it was a movement of the Divine love and holiness upon the heart of man, and that alone; that its one design was to renew the souls of men and form them to holy character, by the portrait of human excellence in the character of Jesus, and by the proof and power of Divine compassion; then, no such representation of its effects as its enemies made had ever been possible, and neither friend nor foe had imagined the Apostle as saying: "Let us do evil that good may come." But, if Paul taught that Christ was a sacrifice for man to the justice of God, a substitute suffering in the room of men and expiating all human sin, then the inference, however false in itself, would have some plausibility. His enemies, in their effort to destroy his doctrine, have made it certain what that doctrine was.

4. The passage which we have now been considering is the only one in the Scriptures in which the need of Atonement is grounded in the Justice of God; and more than any other it has shaped the church's doctrine of Atonement for eight hundred years. This aspect of the subject, as a peculiarity of Paul's doctrine, is particularly deserving of notice.

It must be admitted that Paul does not say that the design of Christ's atoning work was *to satisfy* the Justice of God, but *to manifest* it. But he does say—his whole argument culminates in the assertion—that this manifestation was necessary to make forgiveness right and possible, and that without it God could not have been "just and the justifier" of men. The Justice of God, therefore, made unconditional pardon impossible; the condition was supplied by the propitiation of Christ: and it follows that in a very real sense, if not in the sense of Calvinism—in which the doctrine is generally understood when it is attacked—Christ did satisfy the Justice of God.

The term "Satisfaction" is not found in the New Testament, and appears but once in the Old.* The history of Christian doc-

* Numbers xxxv. 31, 32.

trine does not meet with it, in the sense with which we are familiar until the time of Anselm. He made it so prominent in his *Cur Deus Homo*, and that treatise made so deep an impression on the course of theological thought, that thenceforward the doctrine of Satisfaction became one of the centres of controversy, until it settled into its place as one of the articles of the general faith.

The word is certainly liable to abuse. It suggests the idea of the payment of debt in such a manner that no demand can be made upon those in whose behalf it is rendered. Strictly interpreted, it is inconsistent with the universality of the Atonement, or it requires universal actual salvation; and it belongs properly to the Calvinistic system or to old-fashioned Universalism. It is in such a connection that the doctrine of Satisfaction finds a place in the scheme of Anselm. It was, in his view, the design of God to make up, by the creation and redemption of man, the ideal number of intelligent holy beings, a number which was not completed by the creation of the angels, and was still further lessened by the angelic fall. For "there is no question," he says, "that intelligent nature which finds its happiness, both now and forever, in the contemplation of God, was foreseen by him in a certain reasonable and complete number, so that there would be an unfitness in its being either less or greater."* As modified by Grotius in his "Defence of the Catholic Faith concerning the Satisfaction of Christ," and as held by Arminians generally, the doctrine of Satisfaction to the Justice of God loses the objectionable features: Christ truly satisfies Justice and answers the end of Government in the punishment of sin; but he does this by the manifestation of God's righteousness through sufferings which, for this end, were equivalent to the punishment of sinners, but not that punishment itself. His Satisfaction makes forgiveness possible to every man on condition of his repentance and faith: it does not make forgiveness necessary in the case of any man without the fulfilment of that condition. Still less does

* Anselm: *Cur Deus Homo*, Bk. I. chaps. 16-18. Translated in the Bib. Sac., Oct. 1854 and Jan. 1855.

the use of the word "Satisfaction" by any school of theologians imply—what the common use of it by men as expressive of their own demands implies—the existence of a revengeful feeling which prompts retaliation. The very willingness of God to accept the mediating offices of another holds back the doctrine from such an extreme. Yet, it is by such a misrepresentation of the doctrine of Satisfaction that it is made the butt of the objector's scorn.

The great importance of the doctrine of Satisfaction,—Pauline, Anselmic, and Grotian,—lies in the fact that it finds the necessity of Atonement in the very nature of God. The treatise of Grotius is sometimes charged with serious defect in referring this necessity to the exigencies of government, and not to the nature of God. But God's government derives its character from His character: it is because He is what He is, that His moral rule requires an Atonement for sin. Whether our statement refers the need of Atonement to God's nature or God's administration, it is in harmony with the Pauline doctrine that the Justice of God requires the Atonement.

Justice is that attribute of God which first suggests itself to the mind of man as a necessary constituent of His nature. It is that which, without a revelation, most deeply impresses him, and under whose shadow he lives and trembles. It is of that Nature assures him; for she tells him of inexorable law; she warrants no hope of mercy. It is to that conscience testifies: it points to a law, a Judge, a retribution; it forbids the hope of mercy. It is to the same conclusion, reflection comes. Justice is seen to be necessary to the order of the universe; mercy is not. Though we believe God to be merciful in his nature, we see that in any given case He may exercise mercy or not, as He sees fit and judges right. But, God being just, we cannot think He may, in any particular case, be just or not, as He may choose. He may say "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy:" He cannot say "I will be just to whom I will be just." He may be merciful to the sinful, if He can also be just; but He must be just even while "the justifier

of him that believeth." It must therefore be the case, that when God forgives the sins of men, He does so in a way consistent with His justice. Therefore it does not surprise us, but meets our deepest sense of right, when it is revealed that the Son of God, in saving men from the penalty due their sins, does so in such a manner as to satisfy, uphold, and honour the Justice of God. "The Atonement" is thus "a Satisfaction for the ethical nature of both God and man."*

Theories of the origin and nature of Conscience need not be discussed, for they hardly affect our argument. The most recent theory, which seeks to find a place for it in the general doctrine of evolution, certainly does not. Let it be granted in full, and after all it does not account for the faculty which pronounces the moral imperative—except as it accounts for the existence of man—but for the character of those moral distinctions which are made by men, and which may change with civilizations, with philosophies, with religions, while the faculty which is properly called Conscience remains the same. The existence of Conscience as a real and distinguishing faculty of man continues undisturbed; and the faculty and its operations may as surely be made the matter of observation and the basis of argument, as the contents of consciousness in general, or the phenomena of the external world.

On the commission of sin, arises immediately the sense of guilt: the transgressor judges and condemns himself. This self-condemnation is purely spontaneous. The will has no control over it: it does not arise by effort; it cannot be driven away by resolve. In other words, it is a part of man's very constitution; that is, it is implanted by God; that is, it is the voice of God, and the reflection of His own nature,—it testifies to God and to His moral rule. Now, this sentiment must be propitiated before it can be pacified. It demands atonement for sin, before it can permit the sinner to rest. A report was lately given of the case of a man who had stolen a large sum of money; had been tried

*Shedd: Discourses and Essays. One of the Essays, to which this paragraph is indebted, has for its title the words quoted above.

and acquitted; had afterwards restored the stolen property on receiving a pledge that he would never be exposed; and yet, months afterwards, surrendered himself to justice, because he could have no peace until he accepted the consequences of his sin and made atonement.* Now, in this instance, which, though extreme, illustrates the feelings which exist in every case of wrongdoing where the conscience is not seared, what was that authority which the criminal sought to appease and satisfy by the act of atonement? It will not do to say that it was his own mind; for if a man could be sure that his crime, beginning in himself, was shut up and ended there, he would not trouble himself with exterior considerations. Nor could it be the persons he had defrauded: he had made restitution to them, but was not satisfied. Nor could it be the law of his country: that law had acquitted him, knew no claim against him, never could trouble him again; and yet he deliberately sought its penalties. The only answer that meets the case is that it was the eternal law of right, speaking through his conscience and asserting its claims. But a law unembodied and impersonal could assert no such claims, and inspire no such dread; and it could be no other than the law personal and supreme. Thus the conscience testifies to the personality of God, and bears witness to the need of Atonement.

This has been the testimony and demand of the conscience in all nations and grades and ages of men. It cries out with pain in the poetry of every land and every time. It spoke in the voices of the prophets, and in the penitential Psalms, and in the Hebrew ritual. It has spoken in every system of religion and in all the Sacred Books of man:

"Out from the heart of nature rolled
This burden of the Bibles old." †

The ancient and continuous cry of the soul,—“How should man be just with God?” ‡—it is satisfied first, and only, and fully, in

* New York Christian Advocate, February 19th, 1882.

† Emerson: The Problem. The true reading is—

“Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old.”

‡ Job ix. 2.

the Atonement of God's Son. The man who feels the fact of his sinfulness and perceives the enormity of sin, can take no easy pardon; but he can trust a pardon based upon the Atonement of the Cross, and, while he feels that he is justified, believe that God is just. Then is the conscience

"purified by an authentic act
Of amnesty, the meed of blood Divine." *

The classification and analysis of the Apostle's teachings on the great subject of Atonement which have now been given, enable us to formulate his doctrine. It is, that by the appointment of the love of God, and freely obeying the impulse of His own zeal for God's glory and His own compassion for men, the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself in the death of the Cross as a Substitute and Sacrifice for the world, presenting to the righteous Ruler of the universe an equivalent for the punishment of sinners, and manifesting and magnifying before men the justice and holiness of God; and that, by thus securing the ends of a holy government, he made possible to all men, on condition of their repentance and faith, the pardon of their sins.

OBJECTIONS to St. Paul's doctrine of the Atonement may be arranged under two general heads,—those which relate to its substance, and those which relate to its authorship. Objections of the first kind are made both by those who recognize and those who repudiate the authority of the Bible, the former contending that the doctrine is not taught by the Apostle, and the latter of course considering it a matter of little moment whether he teaches it or not.

1. Objections of the first kind have already, to some extent, been noticed incidentally. It must be sufficient to add that nearly all of them are based upon an imperfect or erroneous statement of the doctrine. All the elements which have been discovered in the Apostle's teaching are necessary, not only to fill out his own conception, but to present the doctrine in a form accept-

*Cowper: Yardley Oak.

able to the reason and the moral sense. Those objections which are urged with the greatest emphasis, and tell with the greatest force, are based for the most part upon partial statements of the truth. The ignoring of some important particular invests the objection with any plausibility it may possess. For instance, the substitution of the innocent for the guilty is represented as an immoral procedure. It may, indeed, be so; but whether it be so will depend upon the circumstances of the case. In this case it has not seemed so to the greatest number of intelligent Christians, to those in whom the moral sense has been most highly educated, who have been most quick to feel the shame of injustice and to blaze with indignation against it. What then makes the difference between those to whom the doctrine is the most affecting statement of both the justice and the love of God, and those who make the objection? It is that "the Christian body has taken the doctrine as a whole, with all the light which the different elements of it throw upon each other, while the objection has only fixed on one element in the doctrine, abstracted from the others."* It has fastened attention upon the substitution of the innocent for the guilty; it has ignored the voluntariness of the Victim and His relation to the Godhead.

A European city was being decimated by a plague so new to the medical world that no means suggested by experience served to stay its ravages, and so perilous to approach that no proper study of it could be made. It was agreed among physicians that until some expert should incur the danger and watch a case through all its phases, the position was hopeless. Who would do it? A young physician said, "I will make the observations to-morrow." During the day he provided means to secure the results of his study, said farewell to his friends, and calmly prepared for death. In the morning he shut himself up with a new victim of the plague, watched by him till the end, dissected the body, made a perfect record of his observations, and then went through the agony and died.

* Mozley: University Sermons, p. 162.

The young physician's devotion was a case of substitution: he took upon himself the suffering some were enduring and others must endure; he died the death some were dying and others must die; he literally took the place of all those who, but for the knowledge of the pestilence and the means of curing it which he gained by the sacrifice of himself, must become its prey. His substitution of himself for them was voluntary, and was prompted by his love to men, or his devotion to science, or both. It could not but command the admiration of all men and the gratitude of those who knew they were saved by his death. But suppose he was appointed to the perilous office by the government of his country, or by a college of physicians and surgeons, being, however, left free to choose. Their appointment could not detract from the merit of his sacrifice, nor impair its influence, nor add one element of injustice to it.

The analogy is good as far as it goes, though of course it does not go far enough, as no human analogy can. It fails of completeness partly because he sustained no such relation to those who appointed him as Christ sustains to God. He was not one with them; they sacrificed nothing in appointing him to die; yet they did not violate justice, if they did not manifest love. But God and Christ are one. Their community of nature and of interest, and the perfect voluntariness of the Sufferer, silence the charge of injustice, and accent at once the righteousness of law and the royalty of love. This substitution, in the language of St. Paul, "declares the righteousness" and "commends the love" of God.

2. Objections of the second kind admit the Pauline character of the doctrine, but maintain that he had no authority to impose it on the church; that it was a private speculation, and an addition of Paul to the Christianity of Christ; and that the development of the doctrine in his own mind can be traced in his epistles when arranged in chronological order.

In answer to the former of these assertions, it might be shown:

(1.) That Paul's doctrine of Atonement is harmonious with that of the Lord, being but the fuller statement of it.*

* See Matt. xxvi. 28; Mark x. 45; John x. 11, 15, and other places.

(2.) That such a fuller statement is what the nature of the case required, and what the Lord's own words direct us to look for. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. * * He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."*

(3.) That it is in harmony with the general plan of Revelation, which is progressive.

This plan, not only in general, but in the particular relation of the teachings of the Epistles to the contents of the Gospels, justifies itself. The true doctrines of Christianity are not speculations: they are the interpretation and application of historic facts. The facts must have been accomplished before they could be understood, their relation appreciated, and their doctrine formed. Christ must die and rise again, and ascend and be glorified, before His own disciples could understand their interest in His humiliation, and the relation of His passion to them and to the world. Without the Epistles, we should stand, in relation to the Gospels, in much the same position in which the disciples stood in relation to the life they saw and the words they heard. And the Epistles are to us, in the understanding of the great facts of the ministry of the Lord, what the revealing agency of the Spirit was to them.†

But, to pass on to the other contention: it is maintained that Paul's doctrine was not at first what it afterwards came to be; that, at most, his earlier views of the death of Christ in relation to man were nothing more than a general belief that in some way—he did not say what, he did not know what—men were benefited by the death of Christ; that, being led by the constitution of his mind to seek a reason for every belief, a philosophy for every fact, he gradually developed a theory of the Atonement which, when finally formed in his mind, he stated in his later Epistles. Even granting such a progress of doctrine in his own

*John xvi. 12-14

† For a very satisfactory discussion of these points, see Bernard: *Progress of Doctrine*, especially Lects. I., III., VI. and VII.

mind, it is a purely gratuitous assertion that this progress was effected by the independent action of his mind and not by the guidance of the Spirit of God. It is of the very nature of inspiration not to supersede the action of the human faculties: for then one man would be as good as another as a medium of Divine Revelation, and the wisdom so evident in the selection of a man like Paul, so variously endowed and so widely trained, to be the chief teacher of Christian doctrine, entirely disappears. It is its nature to blend with the human faculties in their normal exercise, and by its enlightening and guiding influence to secure the accuracy of the results.

Nor, if we grant such a progress, is there any foundation for the belief that in the course of this development St. Paul arrives at a very different view from that with which he started, that his progress has been really a movement backward, and that his final doctrine contradicts his first. It may be shown that his doctrine in the amplest expositions of the later Epistles, is contained in the briefer statements of the first, and is the only development that could logically have been made: as from a given seed, if it germinates at all, must come a certain tree.

A general case is supposed to be proved by the admissions of the Apostle himself. To any argument based upon Phil. iii. 13-15, it is not necessary to refer: for there he is manifestly speaking, not of progress in knowledge and doctrine, but in character and life. With more appearance of reason, however, the declaration that he had "known Christ after the flesh, but now henceforth would know Him so no more,"* is appealed to in proof of the Apostle's consciousness of an advance from a lower to a higher plane of Christian thought. "He had known Christ after the flesh"—had understood and preached Him "in a more Jewish and less spiritual manner than is possible to him now or can ever be again:" "a remarkable confession," says Dean Stanley, "of former weakness and error, and of conscious progress in religious knowledge."†

* 2 Cor. v. 16.

† Stanley: Epistles to the Corinthians, *in loc.*

The meaning of this passage may not, indeed, be obvious to the superficial reader; but there is an explanation of it, which is not only more natural and more in harmony with the line of the Apostle's argument than that which makes him a discoverer in theology, but which also sustains our position, that in regard to the particular doctrine of Atonement by Christ, he held it at first as he did at the last. He is speaking of the universal aspect of the work of Christ, and declares that it has obliterated all ritual, national, and historical distinctions. It is now a matter of perfect indifference whether a man be Jew or Gentile, has been circumcised or has not, keeps the ritual of Moses or does not keep it: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."* And to give emphasis to his assertion that he as a preacher of the Gospel does not regard these human distinctions, he says it is the very same principle which he applies in his view of Christ. He had "known Him after the flesh:" he had dwelt upon the national and historical character of the Messiah; he had been "an Hebrew of the Hebrews." But from the hour when Jesus appeared to him and he received the truth as it is in Him, all was changed: he no longer looked for the Messiah of the Jews, but he believed in Jesus as the Saviour of all men and the glorified Lord of the world. His discovery of the truth was not gradual, his conversion was the date of his change of view.

But, let us briefly look at the evidence of the facts in regard to his supposed development of this particular doctrine of the Atonement. For the maintenance of this proposition it is not enough to show that different topics form the subject-matter of the earlier and the later Epistles; or that the same topics are treated more elaborately in the one than in the other; but that the same topics are presented in lights so different that the views of the later Epistles could not have been held by the same mind, at the same time with those of the former.

Remember that at the time of writing his first Epistle St. Paul had reached the age of fifty, a time of life at which almost every man who has given much thought to important subjects

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

has fixed at least the general character of his views; that he had been fifteen years an Apostle and student of the Christian mysteries; and that within nine or ten years all his known writings were produced,—and how slight the antecedent probability of such a development of doctrine is, will be apparent.

But let us go to the documents themselves. St. Paul's chief work was not that of a writer of doctrinal treatises or pastoral letters, but that of an itinerant preacher of the Gospel. He delivered his message by word of mouth; and it is a purely gratuitous assumption that his verbal instructions did not contain all the doctrinal matter to be found in his most elaborate letters.

Now it happens that his earliest letters—indeed all the letters to churches, except two—were written to churches that he had founded, that he had ministered to for weeks or months or even years, and that were perfectly familiar with his teaching. Accordingly we find that in his letters to them, and to individuals who had enjoyed the privilege of his personal teaching, he appeals to his former ministry, of which no record is preserved, and exhorts them to remember his doctrine and to hold it fast: "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me."* When, after an absence of three or four years, he writes to the church at Corinth with which he had spent at least eighteen months, he reminds its members of the general character of his preaching: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified;"† and yet more fully, "I declare unto you, brethren, the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; * * * for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."‡ The Epistle to the Galatians which is confidently appealed to as illustrating the development of St. Paul's doctrine in its later stages, contains conclusive evidence to the contrary. For, what is the purpose of this Epistle? It is to re-establish and confirm them in a doctrine which he had taught them, and from which they are being led astray. The doctrine is one of such vital import-

* 2 Tim. i. 13.

† 1 Cor. ii. 2.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 1-3.

ance, and the evil of forsaking it is so great, that he writes with a warmth of feeling, an enthusiasm for the truth, a fire of indignation against the seducers, which find a parallel in no other production of his pen: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed;"* "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"† He contemplates with bitter pain the ruin of his fair work by the substitution of a spurious gospel for the pure truth he had taught: "After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? * * * I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."‡ And the matter of the controversy is this very subject of the Atonement, and, as connected with it, Justification by Faith: "Ye are now being taught salvation by works. I taught you salvation by the redemptive work of another. No man is justified by the law in the sight of God. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us;" and all his statement of the vicarious work of Christ which the Epistle contains, and which is asserted to be the theorizings of a later Paul, as against the practical teaching of the earlier, is claimed by him to be the very vital doctrine he had taught among the churches of Galatia. And, be it remembered, this preaching in Galatia was in the earlier months of his second missionary tour, and before the writing of his first letter.

Further: the very brevity of his statements in his early letters to churches of his own founding, on a matter of such transcendent importance as Christ's mediatorial work,—as for example when in first Thessalonians he says, in passing, "Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come;"§ and again, "God hath

* Gal. i. 6-8.

† Gal. iii. 1.

‡ Gal. iv. 9-11.

§ 1 Thess. i. 10.

appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us,"* — implies their knowledge of the fuller doctrine; for otherwise, statements so strange and so short would have perplexed and disturbed them. But it may be reasonably urged that these statements, while to those who had no others, they would be indefinite and confusing, did to them who had the oral ministry, as they do to us who have the longer letters, contain in brief the Apostle's doctrine of Atonement by the vicarious sufferings of the Lord.

Once more: he distinctly repudiates the suggestion that his doctrine was the final result of his speculations, or his own discovery at any time whatever. He claims that he was taught it by the Lord Himself: "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."†

Such then, if our expositions have been correct, is St. Paul's doctrine of the Atonement; and such are some of the reasons for thinking it consonant with the intimations of conscience, and with the eternal principles of justice and right. Does any one say it belongs to a severe type of orthodoxy, and is not in harmony with the prevailing liberality of modern thought? Be it so. That is a question for which we do not care in comparison with others. It is St. Paul's: it is his Lord's. It is old: it is also new. It has maintained its place in the Christian mind and conscience through all Christian history: it has the promise of the future. All other theories, however much they fascinate the speculative, charm the so-called liberal, or flatter a nature that rebels against the charge of sinfulness which the Pauline doctrine makes against all men, are but side eddies of the stream; while the great current of Christian thought and doctrine, moving ever onward, yet remembers and reveals from what fountain it has come.

Having gained a clear conception of this truth as it lay in the mind of the Apostle and was expressed in his Epistles, we

* 1 Thess. v. 9, 10.

† Gal. i. 11, 12.

may put our knowledge to several important uses. We may go through the history of the doctrine in the church, and test the accuracy of the successive phases through which it has passed. We may also survey the field as it lies before us to-day, and discover where, in the various forms the doctrine now assumes, the truth is most largely found.

But our subject is not only of speculative importance. As churches are distinguished by their view of the Atonement, so, and for that reason, are they distinguished by the nature and range of their activities, and by the character and degree of their influence on the world.

It is of profoundly personal interest too. The type of experience and character must be affected by a man's view of this truth, and of the relation in which, in consequence of his view, he believes that he stands to Christ.

In connection with this subject, more than all others, the speculative should be held subordinate to, and made to promote, the personal and practical. The spirit in which our inquiries should be, and I trust have been, conducted, and the result to which they should lead, are well expressed in the words of the great Bishop Butler: "Some have endeavoured to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, beyond what the Scripture has authorized: others, probably because they could not explain it, have been for taking it away, and confining His office as Redeemer of the world to His instruction, example, and government of the church. * * * It is our wisdom thankfully to accept the benefit, by performing the conditions upon which it is offered, on our part, without disputing how it was procured on His."* The same Bishop Butler it was who, when drawing near the final hour and the judgment throne, found no peace in thinking of the careful habits of his life, or of the splendid services he had given to the cause of truth; but when a Curate by his bed side, repeating Scripture words of hope and comfort, read "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," his face lighting up with a new and heavenly

* Butler's Analogy, Part II., Chap. V.

radiance, said, "I have read those words a thousand times, but I never felt their meaning as now."

"Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Lord, I believe Thy precious Blood,
Which, at the Mercy-seat of God,
For ever doth for sinners plead,
For me, even for my soul, was shed.

Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,
For all a full Atonement made.

When from the dust of death I rise,
To claim my mansion in the skies,
E'en then—this shall be all my plea,
Jesus hath lived, hath died for me."

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THE INCARNATION
AND
ITS LESSONS:

BEING

THE FOURTH ANNUAL SERMON BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL
UNION OF MOUNT ALLISON WESLEYAN COLLEGE.

DELIVERED JUNE, 1882.

BY

REV. A. D. MORTON, A. M.

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SERMON.

For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.—*Col. ii. 9.*

THE age in which we live professes to delight in a religion of a humanitarian and practical character, as distinguished from one that is spiritual and dogmatic or theological. There are causes which have doubtless developed this sentiment and which are not difficult to determine, nor need we look upon the sentiment itself as necessarily or wholly evil. It marks a transition period, and will doubtless issue in the attainment on the part of the church of a higher plane of thought and life. But meanwhile, it behoves those—whose it is to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—to remember and act upon the principle, that dogma underlies all Christian life, that the latter is inseparable from the former. The clear and distinct presentation of doctrinal truth is therefore essential, and no popular whine should seduce the Christian Teacher from the discharge of his duty in this regard.

Around each and every doctrine enunciated in God's Word, and held by evangelical Christendom, the storm of opposition has gathered and raged with relentless fury, and if they stand to-day and are potent over men's hearts, it is because they have a Divine origin and attestation. Certain doctrines we are wont to regard as fundamental, as constituting the very life of the Christian System, and therefore essential to its success and ultimate triumph. We cannot err in regarding the doctrine of Christ's Divinity in this light. If it be a revealed truth it must be of the highest importance, to which many other truths, relatively important, are necessarily subordinate. The virulence with which this dogma has been assailed is a clear indication that, in the popular judgment, it constitutes not only a foundation stone, but a chief corner stone in the system of the Christian

Faith. Nevertheless, in the advocacy of this cardinal doctrine, we are not uncharitable; we do not forget that some of the noblest teachers of Christian ethics did not hold this doctrine in its integrity, did not somehow clothe their teachings upon this subject in language acceptable to us. But when we find one of the most distinguished of these, discoursing upon the "Character of Christ," making use of these words, "He talks of his glories as one to whom they were familiar, and of his intimacy and oneness with God, as simply as a child speaks of his connection with his parents. He speaks of saving and judging the world, of drawing all men to himself, and of giving everlasting life, as we speak of the ordinary powers which we exert," we cannot understand how, in his view, the character and claims of Christ can be other than truly and essentially Divine. If this morning I presume upon a survey of this grand doctrine as correlated to other truths, I but claim to walk in paths explored and opened up by others. The subject must needs have an interest for all who claim to be serious and thoughtful, irrespective of the views they personally profess to hold. Between the passionate adoration that distinguishes some in regard of the person of Christ and the defiant hatred that distinguishes others, there are varied shades and levels of thought and feeling, but there is no room for, no toleration of, indifference. Our text, we take to be, by the intention of the writer, a positive and unequivocal assertion of the proper divinity of Christ, and to the support of this assertion, the reasoning of the Epistle, at once logical and conclusive, is largely directed.

Let it not be supposed however that this doctrine rests upon isolated passages for its support. The Scriptures, as a whole, testify of Christ, and in particular of Him in His divine character and claims. This testimony is gradually unfolded. The germ of all that inheres in the person and work of Christ is contained in the promise so early given to man, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." But while the Old Testament Scriptures are by no means reticent upon this subject, it remains for the later writings of a more privileged dispensa-

tion to reveal in full orb'd clearness and splendor this marvellous truth. Although our object this morning may be to contemplate Christ as divine, and although the argument and assertion of Scripture may lie chiefly in this direction, it does not follow that we are to forget or overlook the essential humanity of the Son of God. It is the conjunction of these distinct natures in one person that makes Christ the cynosure of all eyes, that constitutes Him not only the typical man, but the man by whom, in virtue of his relations to mankind generally, the race is rescued from the ruins of the Fall. The delineations of the Gospel furnish such a portraiture of the MAN Christ Jesus as to leave an abiding impression of His humanity. Whatever lay behind that nature, might be a question involving a difference of opinion, but as to the humanity itself there can be no doubt.

We may consider Christ's dignity and relative position as a man; we may make this man the equal of angels; we may make him the chiefest of created beings; we may *Deify* him; he may be the Son of God, but whatever else he is, he is a man. It is the *man* that first appears before me, that I learn to know, and that I ultimately find to be more than man. The voice of the ages is not, What is Christ? but, Who is Christ, the man Christ Jesus? "What think ye of Him? Whose son is He?" We are very apt to feel that the dogma of Christ's divinity must be highly important, because it is one so fiercely contested, so strongly insisted upon, on the one hand, so strenuously denied on the other, and fail to realize the not less important fact of His humanity. It is not of God in His essence and abstract relations that we speak to-day. It is not of God, thus viewed, that we speak in those earnest addresses and appeals by which we seek to move men's consciences and reclaim them from the paths of sin by inspiring in their hearts hopes of forgiveness, and insisting upon the possibilities of our redeemed nature. It is of *God made man*; of God who in our nature suffered and died; God our helper, our brother, our Saviour. It is of Him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. God incarnate is the grandest fact in human history. But herein lies the ques-

tion,—Is this man, God? To consider this question with any degree of fulness is impossible. We may, however, glance at it. To the objection of mystery or impossibility, we pay little heed. Mystery we look for. "Impossibility" is a word not to be mentioned where God, in His aims and purposes, is concerned.

Nor are we using the word "divine" in any modified sense. Without qualification, we apply it to the man Christ Jesus. The purpose of Christ's coming into the world, as proclaimed by Himself, would seem to be suggestive of His divine character. Admitting for one moment the fact of the incarnation as held by evangelical Christendom, the question at once arises, What is the object? And it is almost axiomatic, that the object, in its grandeur and importance, must be commensurate with the measures taken to realize it.

That purpose was not merely the salvation of so many souls, but the establishment of a kingdom that was to be "world-wide and imperishable."

No earthly monarchy then or now, existent, furnished in the principles of its constitution, a model for the kingdom that Christ set up. A visible kingdom in a certain sense it was, but in its distinctive characteristics, it was to be a moral kingdom, whose ruler should exercise supreme domination over the hearts and consciences of His subjects. In the Sermon on the Mount, we have furnished those laws which will, through all coming time, guide and govern those who become members of this spiritual kingdom. By reference to these, it will at once be perceived that no mere outward observance will be sufficient or even possible. They imply, in the hearts of those who receive them, a new life, bringing them into conscious sympathy with the ends those laws were designed to promote.

The agency and methods employed in the fulfilment of this purpose are, to say the least, extraordinary, in that they differ so materially from what in our preconceived notions they would necessarily be. The commission to propagate Christ's teachings and extend the limits of His kingdom, is entrusted to a small and uninfluential body of men, men who by their original social

relations, their inherent cowardice, as evidenced in connection with the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, as well as by other considerations, seem to lack the first qualifications for so important a work. These men however constituted the human instrumentality which was opposed to the pride and prejudice and power of the world.

In regard to methods, they were restricted. Those which, in the popular judgment are justifiable and essential in connection with political achievements, the conquest of nations, the propagation of human systems of religion, were prohibited. They were to go forth without provision or equipment of any sort,—their sole dependence the inspiring promise, "Lo, I am with you always;" and as they went, they were to preach,—simply preach, allowing their simple utterances, accompanied by the energy of the promised Spirit to do the work—to lay siege to the human heart and conscience, to revolutionize the sentiment of the world, and usher in the dawn of that day when "Jesus shall rule all human thought, shall make Himself the centre of all human affections, shall become the Lawgiver of humanity, and the object of man's adoration."

Is it to be wondered at that some writers have designated this plan in its essence and the agencies and methods by which it was to reach forth to its accomplishment, both original and audacious? Surely its author, whatever our ultimate impression of him may be, must arrest our gaze and awaken within us the earnest enquiry, "Who is He?" We cannot doubt that Christ came into the world fully furnished with credentials, certifying both His divine character and mission, so that those who in the days of His flesh rejected Him, were without excuse, but the lapse of nineteen centuries has undoubtedly lifted us up to higher vantage ground in respect of affording us opportunities to judge of Christ and the merit of His claims. His predictions and promises have been subjected to that test which time and human experience alone can furnish. And to these we make our appeal. Is it objected? "The end is not yet. Generations must rise and pass away. The age of the future may change the aspect

of affairs to-day and involve the hopes now cherished in utter disappointment." If there are those who find comfort in this refuge of unbelief, we envy them not. The period which has elapsed since the institution of Christianity is surely sufficient to afford a basis on which to rest our estimate of its merits and warrant a confidence as to its future. Having appealed then to these sources, what answer is returned? It is, I believe, said to the visitor of St. Paul's Cathedral, concerning its architect, "If you would see his monument, look around." With greater propriety may we say to one who asks what is the testimony of the ages respecting Christ, "Whose Son is He?" "Look around." The church to-day, loyal in its attachment to Christ, instinct with the life of its Founder, reaching forth with unrepressed ardor and with unquestioned certainty to the subjugation of the world to Him, furnishes you the living, irresistible answer. We cannot overstate the significance of the fact that the Church instituted of Christ still lives—nor have the centuries of her existence induced the elements of decay. The careful and honest student of history will testify that never in the past did she gather to herself such elements of strength and ultimate glory as in this the nineteenth century of her existence. With mingled feelings of amazement and assurance we contrast the Jerusalem Church in the upper chamber, representing the body of believers in that early day with the gigantic proportions which the church has since assumed, including within her embrace the representatives of all lands and languages, of all conditions in social and intellectual life. Who can estimate her power over human thought and action in the present day, those subtle yet wholesome influences that radiate from her as a centre, disintegrating the corrupt masses of evil in society, and infusing the leaven of truth and purity and justice and love!

What is it that characterizes the civilization of this nineteenth century, giving it its peculiar glory as compared with the centuries of the past, making it the age of freedom in thought and action, the age of philanthropic endeavour, the age that more than any other recognizes the true brotherhood of man? Do we

mistake if we ascribe these features of our age to the growing power of Christianity as expressed in the lives and influence of those who, aggregated, constitute the Church of Christ upon earth? I am not unfamiliar with some of those specious forms of objection that may be urged against all I have said in this connection. There are, doubtless, those who will not admit the fairness or force of any argument; but if what I have said be true, then what follows? In what light must we look upon the Author of Christianity, the Founder of the Christian church? I make my appeal to the common sense of our humanity, and am satisfied as to the answer that will formulate itself in ten thousand thousand hearts and find a voice, which in thunder tones will go ringing o'er the hills and valleys of our redeemed earth, the reverberating echo of that voice that spake beneath the shades of Calvary, "Truly this Man is the Son of God." The testimony of the first Napoleon, though not that of a professed theologian, is for some reasons the more to be valued on that account, and is especially suggestive here. Proposing one day the enquiry, "Can you tell me who Jesus Christ was?" and failing to elicit any answer, he continued, "Well, then, I will tell you. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him. . . . I think I understand something of human nature, and I tell you, all these were men, and I am a man: none else is like Him; Jesus Christ was more than man. I have inspired multitudes with such an enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me; but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present with the electric influence of my looks, of my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them, I lighted up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts. . . . Christ alone has succeeded in so raising the mind of man towards the Unseen, that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years, Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy; He asks for the human heart; He will have it entirely to Himself; He demands it

unconditionally ; and forthwith His demand is granted. Wonderful ! In defiance of time and space, the soul of man with all its powers and faculties, becomes an annexation to the empire of Christ. All who sincerely believe in Him, experience that remarkable supernatural love towards Him. This phenomenon is unaccountable ; it is altogether beyond the scope of man's creative powers. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame ; time can neither exhaust its strength nor put a limit to its range. This is it which strikes me most ; I have often thought of it. This is it which proves to me quite convincingly the Divinity of Jesus Christ." And this is the verdict of the intelligence and wisdom of mankind in every age.

But I forbear to pursue further a line of argument familiar to my brethren—one that, followed step by step, cannot fail to bring conviction to the candid mind. Well I know whom I am addressing, and it is not because your faith is weak or that I deem the Rationalism of the day has any undue influence over you, that I thus speak ; but it seemed proper under present circumstances, to, at least, call attention to the great fact which the popular mind can appreciate, as an evidence of the Divinity of Him whom we adore as our Saviour.

There are those before me who, while they can appreciate that line of argument which appeals more particularly to the intellectual and moral parts of our nature, are resting not upon this as the inspirer of their joy and the foundation of that hope which is as an "anchor to the soul." To your inner consciousness Christ has spoken, not by the matchless wisdom of His teachings or the unsurpassed grandeur of His works, but by that still small voice that proclaims pardon for your sins and peace with God, and with an apprehension divinely inspired of what is involved in the "mystery of Godliness," your soul cries out in its longing for a richer and yet richer experience of the life of God.

"Answer Thy mercy's whole design,
My God incarnated for me ;
My spirit make Thy radiant shrine,
My light and full salvation be ;
And through the shades of death unknown
Conduct me to Thy dazzling Throne."

We accept, then, the fact of the Incarnation. But what is involved in it? What of blessing, or comfort, or help for our sin-crushed, sorrowing humanity? Would I could tell you. I think the first great need that the Incarnation supplies is man's need of God. How real, how intense this need is, the records of human history abundantly testify. The ages of dim and uncertain light reveal here and there souls groping amid the darkness and the gloom, seeking God, studying Nature's half opened book, to learn of Him who made all things and impressed some lineaments of Himself on all the works of His hands. The vagaries of uninformed minds, the absurdities which have marked the superstitions born of the religious element in man, all go to show that man was formed for God, that He alone can become his satisfying portion.

But who is the Lord and unto what will ye liken Him? How difficult it has been to conceive of God—not so much of His existence, but His character, His disposition toward us. And without just conceptions here, how shall we cherish suitable feelings towards Him who is the Author of our being and in whose hands for good or evil we feel ourselves to be. We see an attempt to respond to these yearnings in the hierarchical system of the Church of Rome—and if we seek an explanation of the dominancy of that church over the hearts and consciences of its adherents we find it in the eagerness with which the soul, irrespective of intellectual developments and attainments, grasps after some personation of the Deity. This personation we have in Christ, not proximately, but really.

"God did in Christ Himself reveal,
To chase our darkness by His light,
Our sin and ignorance dispel,
Direct our wandering feet aright,
And bring our souls, with pardon blest,
To realms of everlasting rest."

Here then is our privilege, brethren,—not to preach doctrines, not to preach morals merely, but to preach Christ, Christ crucified; but Christ a divine Saviour, a living and exalted Saviour.

Oh! when this relationship of Christ is understood, is it any wonder that men have risen up in their pity, in their love, men with Paul's spirit in them, yearning to carry the glad tidings to their fellows; willing to suffer exile and shame and death, that to those sunk in the darkness and despair of sin they might proclaim this Saviour in His love and power to save. Our mission may not challenge such heroism as this, but it is grand, and often in moments of earthly sorrow and despondency, the consciousness of having led some soul to know and embrace this Saviour, thrills the heart with heaven's own joy, and constrains to a renewed consecration to the duties and toils involved in the ministry of the Cross.

The second lesson taught me by the Incarnation, follows naturally and necessarily from the first. Is the man who died for me a Divine Being? Is he possessed of Divine resources? Then indeed I have nothing left to desire. I look at myself: I see myself in my sinfulness, my helplessness, my moral destitution, my spiritual hopelessness. The picture cannot be overdrawn; but, turning to the portraiture of my Saviour as presented in the inspired volume, I find "in Him all fulness dwells, and that for wretched man." As an individual in need of salvation, I rejoice; as a minister, commissioned to preach Christ, I rejoice, because I can go to man wherever I find him, and proclaim the most joyful intelligence that can affect the human heart. Is sin an offence against a divine law, an offence that must be atoned for? I lean on a Sacrifice commensurate with man's utmost needs. Once assure me that in Him who died for me, dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and I see an infinite merit attaching to the sacrifice of Calvary. It becomes to me no longer a question of this man's sins or that man's sins, or the sins of any given number of men, but of sin as existing in the world, sin barring man's approach to God, sin dooming the guilty ones to that everlasting death which is the appointed penalty of sin. Sin in this sense is atoned for. The benefits of this atonement are not only such as to relieve my mind on the score of personal guilt and exposure, but are, most evidently, the common heritage of the race.

(3.) Do I find that a mere atonement for sin past cannot suffice, that more than forgiveness is needed? Again, the assuring power of the Incarnation, apprehended in its significance, is realized. I have as my reliance not only the benefits of Christ's death, but I enjoy His perpetual offices as a Saviour. There is blessed meaning in those promises which speak of a spirit of truth operating in my heart to the renewal of my nature, imparting unto me at once purity and the power to live conformably to that will which constitutes the law of my being.

It does not dismay me when I am told of the sinful propensities of my nature, of my weakness, and the possibility of my lapsing into sin. I have a living Saviour, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He can keep me: He will keep me: "Wherefore He is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him." I trouble not my mind with mysteries which are unfathomable in their depths, so far-reaching in their connections as to utterly baffle my powers of vision. I see it to be a simple matter of reliance upon Christ, of continual trust in Him as a personal Saviour, and my mind finds rest.

(4.) Again: man seems to possess an inborn consciousness of the need of an Intercessor,—a Daysman, who can mediate in our behalf with God. I see my co-religionists, many of them, in serious error here, as I conceive. Impelled by their sense of need in this regard, their appeals are made to the Mother of our Saviour, to various saints, who are deemed worthy to act in this capacity: I say not only how wrong, how derogatory to the Divine glory, but how *needless*! Give me to understand the blended nature of Christ, and He possesses in perfection the qualifications that this office might seem to require. I go to God through Him,—through Him alone. I cannot doubt His interest in me; nor can I doubt the prevalency of His intercession.

(5.) Yet again: I look out upon life's dark and stormy experience. There are other than spiritual aspects to our nature. Forgive me if I have seemed to dwell too much on these. I look at life—human life—a brief thing at best, but often crowded

full of sorrows that roll like ocean waves over us. I am awakening painful memories now. To my congregation, I may be a stranger ; I may not recognize your faces ; I may not know your names ; you may think your personal experience is something of which I am profoundly ignorant ; but stop, tell me this : In what respect is our brotherhood—the brotherhood of man, wherever you find him, made most apparent ? Is it not in this, that sorrow is our common heritage. I see, wherever I go, the outward semblance and tokens of those experiences through which, dark and distressing though they be, we one and all seem doomed to pass, while here. The cemetery, the rural churchyard, God's acre, call it if you will,—where will you go that you find it not. I enter these sacred enclosures ; I read from the monuments that record names, dates, and many a fact beside ; I go back with mourning ones to the homes made desolate by death ; I see a mother bending tenderly, tearfully over the couch on which her babe is breathing its life away ; I see a wife watching, while the gathering shadows of death are closing upon the husband, stricken in his prime ; I see the anguish depicted in her countenance as her eyes are lifted appealingly to heaven. You know all about it,—the weary watching, the dying hope, the chill despair, the desolateness of that home from which a loved one has been taken, the memory that lingers like a pain for which there is no earthly anodyne. Oh God ! is there anything that can meet such sorrow as this ? There is. Jesus becomes my refuge ; my Saviour tasted, aye, He drank, in its fulness and bitterness, the cup of earthly sorrow. I have not only human sympathy in Him, I have a Divine, and therefore, all-sufficient helper.

“Through all the tangled maze
Of losses, sorrows, and o'erclouded days
We know His will is done ;
And still He leads us on,
And He at last,
After the weary strife
After the restless fever we call life,
After the dreariness, the aching pain,
The wayward struggles which have proved in vain,
After our toils are past,
Will give us rest at last.”

Finally. The thought of the Incarnation is to me the symbol and pledge that what constitutes the fondest anticipations of my heart shall be realized. I follow the footsteps of my Saviour from Bethlehem to Calvary. I trace with loving eagerness those footsteps as they emerge from the garden on the morn of the resurrection, till that day when having led His disciples as far as Bethany, the crucified, the risen Son of God and Son of Man, the Conqueror of sin, the Conqueror of death, ascended in our nature. Oh, think of it! Ascended into Heaven! There He perpetuates that mysterious union, and there

"We shall see Him in our nature,
Seated on His lofty Throne,
Lord, adored by every creature,
Owned as God, and God alone."

The importance of this perpetuation of Christ's humanity consists to some extent in this (I speak for myself), that it seems to invest Heaven with what may be termed material aspects. I cannot very well conceive of spiritual essences. A Heaven peopled with such essences has no attractive power on my mind. But give me a Heaven where dwells my Saviour in bodily shape and form, where my humanity is represented in His person, and you give me a pledge, that the loved ones passed into the spirit world, whatever may be their meanwhile condition, will ultimately with bodily form appear to my gaze. And the joy of Heaven consists not only in the recognition of my Saviour, but the recognition of those whose departure has made earth a lonesome place and whom I wait to greet in that land of which the poet so beautifully sings:

"Sorrow and death may not enter there,
Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom,
For beyond the clouds and beyond the tomb,
It is there, it is there, it is there."

We are entering, brethren, upon the second century of our church's history in these Provinces. May our ministry, like that of our Fathers, be made powerful for the salvation of souls, by the earnest preaching of Christ, and the apprehension of this blessed truth, that "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."